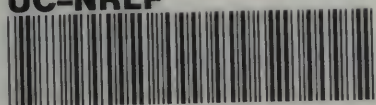
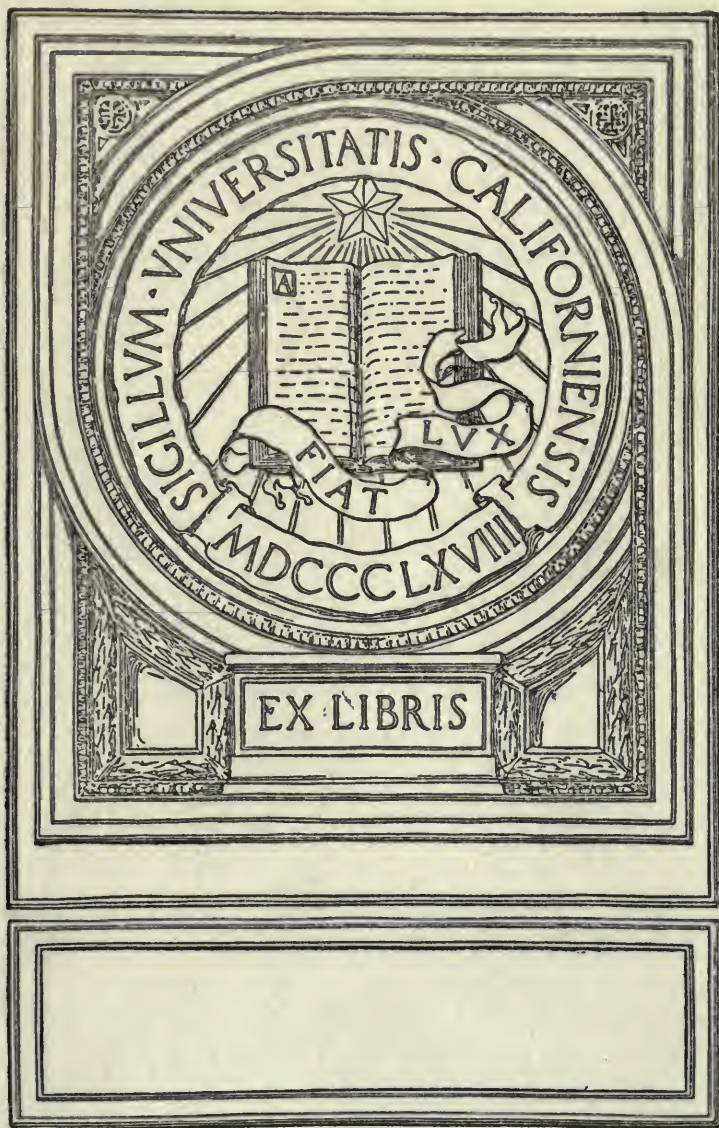


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PROSE WRITINGS OF WORDSWORTH.

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PROSE WRITINGS OF WORDS-
WORTH; SELECTED AND EDITED,
WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY
WILLIAM KNIGHT, LL.D.



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P R E F A C E.

MANY of the extracts in this little book are from letters written by Wordsworth, who—notwithstanding his dislike to the labour of correspondence—was a voluminous letter-writer, especially if the work of transcription could be done for him by his sister or his wife. Most of them, however, are taken from the Prefaces, Appendices, and Notes to the successive editions of his own Poems, and from his longer prose Essays, especially his “Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England.” For the selection, the arrangement, and the title given to each extract, the editor is exclusively responsible.

It should be added that in some cases sentences, and in others entire paragraphs, are left out from the passages quoted, for the

omission of which the editor is also responsible. His aim has been to collect, from all sources, the most interesting specimens of Wordsworth's prose writing, not so much as samples of his style, as of his mode of treating both great and small problems. They illustrate the genius of the poet, cutting directly down through difficulties, and thus solving problems, with which the logical understanding is less competent to deal, by the simple force of intuition. The perusal of these extracts may lead some persons to the study of Wordsworth's prose-works, as a whole; and the publication of a part of them, in this form, may prepare the way for a more complete edition of his Entire Works than any that at present exists.

Several things contained in this book will not be found, either in what was published in Wordsworth's lifetime, or in the *Memoirs* by his nephew written in 1850, or in the *Prose Works* issued in 1876, or in any subsequent *Life* of the poet. It contains material which has come to light since the Poems and Prose Works were published — *e.g.*, the letters to the Beaumont family at Coleorton, to Henry Crabb Robinson, to Rowan Hamilton, and to several others, from

unexhausted sources which are still available for future use.

An elaborate Preface to this volume is unnecessary. It would be "caviare to the general." Although Wordsworth's main achievements, and the debt which posterity owes to him, rest chiefly on his poetic work—and although the great range of his prose writings is not generally known—a detailed critical estimate of each of the latter would require a volume as long as the present. Besides, it would not subserve the end, which the present book tries to fulfil, as regards the appreciation of our great Nature-Poet. A chronological list of his prose-works, and of various writings unpublished by himself, will be of greater use to the future student of Wordsworth than any comments of mine can be; and it is given at the close of this preface. Discarding the details of that list, Wordsworth's most important contributions were—(1) the Prefaces, Appendices, and Notes to his own poems; (2) the Memoranda which he dictated to Miss Fenwick; (3) his occasional Essays on the Political Questions of the Day; (4) his familiar Letters to his Sister, to Coleridge, John Wilson, Walter Scott, De Quincey, the Beaumonts, Henry Crabb Robinson, Rowan

Hamilton, Professor Reed, and many others ; (5) and, above all, his Description of the Scenery of the Lakes.

It is undeniably true that, for the permanent purposes of Literature, a collection of Extracts from a notable writer has no special value. On the other hand, for the instruction and delight of the many, who do not (and perhaps cannot) resort to the classical editions of the great Masters, such a collection may be of special use, if it is accurately made ; and, if the thoughtful reader has a clue, by which to follow up each extracted passage, and to read its context, if he desires to do so. I have therefore, in all cases, given the source whence the quotation is taken. Every one knows that each item in the *omnia opera*, even of "great writers," is not of equal value. We have plenty of literary charcoal beside the diamond. Much chaff exists along with the wheat ; and the thought is often entertained,—if the remark is not made,—“Would that So-and-so had not written, or had not published, one half of what he has given us.” Some of our greatest writers have been least conscious of the point at which their insight, and their faculty of expression, have failed them. They have been ignorant of the

width of the interval between their moments of supreme inspiration and their moods of commonplace. Wordsworth was certainly no exception to this; and one who has read all his prose writings that have been published, and some that remain as yet unpublished, may well shrink from offering them in their entirety to the world. Whatever future opportunity there may be for a detailed literary treatment of Wordsworth's prose, the aim of this little book is merely to let the ordinary reader know how much of real and abiding value—the refined gold of clear insight and profound philosophy—is to be found in these prose writings.

The general characteristics of Wordsworth's Prose are its lucidity, its freshness, its wholesomeness, its elevation, and its marvellous divination of the truth of things. It is an inaccurate eulogy to describe all the dust of his writings as gold-dust. Not only in his prose, but in his poetry, we occasionally find a too obvious descent to commonplace. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the most philosophical poet of the century—until we come to Browning and to Tennyson—contributed something to the development of

our English Prose, and to our national Thought and Life, as well as to some of our distinctively English Institutions, in a noteworthy manner; while his anticipation of the solution of many of our practical problems was remarkable.

To arrange the Prose Writings of Wordsworth in selected artificial groups—as Wordsworth himself arranged his Poems, and as Matthew Arnold followed him in a subsequent grouping of them—is a mistake. It is extremely difficult to see what benefit can result from these arbitrary classifications, especially when they do not possess the author's sanction. There is surely some presumption in the work of an editor, who attempts to rearrange the writings of one of the *Dei majores* of literature after a model of his own, and in groups constructed by the imagination of the compiler. From every point of view, a chronological arrangement is the wisest for posterity. It has been adopted in the present instance, partly because it exhibits the growth of the poet's mind in different directions, showing his early democratic sympathy, and his subsequent reaction from Republicanism, the change of his intellectual and moral view-point on many problems, as life advanced, and the

gradual evolution of his genius ; while it also proves that, from the very first,

The child was father to the man.

In his *Letter to the Bishop of Landaff, on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Principles, contained in the Appendix to his late Sermons, by a Republican*—(note the prosaic title adopted)—we have a most thoroughgoing defence of an ultra-democratic position ; one which might gratify the most advanced radical now living. The young poet, twenty-three years old, is seen in this letter as the ardent opponent of Authority, denouncing the privileges of State and Church alike, and of all that has merely the justification of time.

As is now well known, Wordsworth was the original of Browning's *Lost Leader*. I had some conversation with Browning on the subject in 1881 ; and at an earlier date—in 1875—he wrote to Mr. Grosart, "I did, in my hasty youth, presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model." He did not mean it, however, to be a portrait of the entire man, "the *vera effigies* of such a moral and intellectual superiority ;" but, as he says in

his poem on Guerchino's *Guardian Angel at Fano*—

I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.

It is noteworthy that while Browning deplored the subsequent "change of politics in the great poet," he was one of the first to recognise, in Wordsworth's appreciation of what was good—and even necessary—in the French Revolution, the width of his sympathy with the many, and their aspirations, in the ever memorable lines—

Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley were with us, they watch from their graves ;
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves.

The thoughtful reader of Wordsworth will see that there is perfect consistency between the democratic sympathies of his young manhood and the conservative reaction which followed. His subsequent recoil from the extravagant promise of Democracy was a consistent unfolding of the very tendency which originated the poet's sympathy with it. His letter to the Bishop of Landaff records the change which passed over the spirit of the Nature-

Poet, when Man became to him an object of still deeper interest, Man in relation to Nature. Its chief interest for posterity is not its avowal of republicanism, but its evidence of sympathy with man as man, or with Human Nature in its elements. The attack upon titles and primogeniture, the opposition to monarchy and aristocratic privilege, is outside the main drift of this remarkable letter. These constituted its negative error; but its positive truth was the courageous and joyous avowal of sympathy with the aspirations of human nature as such, and with all that properly belongs to man. Wordsworth saw, in the *promise* of the Revolution, the realisation of the ideals of his youth and early manhood. Hence his letter to Bishop Watson. But, when he afterwards saw, in the *results* of that Revolution, and the attack of France on Switzerland (the old home of Liberty) the triumph of the very opposite principle, the victory of selfishness, and the tyranny of the plebs—a more cruel though not perhaps so corrupt a tyranny as that against which the Revolution was a protest—he had a “rude awakening”; and recoiled from the democratic cause, which he had previously supported with such ardour.

Wordsworth's original sympathy was with the
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aspirations, and the legitimate rights, of the people; but with the intellectual ideas, which underlay the whole movement in European society, of which the French Revolution was the outcome, he had no sympathy whatsoever. He had little in common with the eighteenth century, and the ideals of Rousseau; and had practically no appreciation of the aims of Voltaire, or of Diderot. In 1821 he wrote, "I should think that I had lived to little purpose if my notions on the subject of Government had undergone no modification; my youth must, in that case, have been without enthusiasm, and my manhood endowed with small capability of profiting by reflection."

The explanation of the professed recoil of Wordsworth from the democratic sympathies of his youth is to be found in his very patriotism. When Britain was left almost alone in its conflict with despotic power, his moral nature was stirred to its deepest depths, and his pamphlet on *The Convention of Cintra* is a record of this moral indignation. It was the protest, not of a soldier, but of a citizen, and of one who regarded every international problem in its bearing on the interests of the individual. The moral tone which breathes, and almost burns, through this

pamphlet, raises it to a high place amongst modern discussions of military problems; and it will probably live in Literature as one of the best English examples of the ethical treatment of a great international question. It was originally a communication to *The Courier* newspaper, in the months of December 1808, and January 1809, but it was expanded and issued by itself, in pamphlet form, in 1809; the appendix to it being written not by Wordsworth, but by De Quincey.

It is to be noted that Wordsworth stood aloof from—although he did not despise—the great scientific movement, so characteristic of this century, and which is the legitimate result of the realism of the eighteenth. He was not specially interested in the discoveries of modern Science; although he grasped, by intuition, what is deepest in these discoveries, and that which underlies them all. But he recoiled to the opposite side, by the force of an insight, which divined the secrets that are hid from the eye which takes note only of phenomena, and their laws. He may be said to have anchored himself very early within a sphere, from which he looked down (as from above) on the strife of rival sects, coteries, and parties. This was the result of his supreme

vision, "seeing into the life of things"; and it gave him a personal calm, and an indifference to misunderstanding, to hostile criticism and assault, which were the very safeguards of his genius; although they may have developed slight egotisms, and even eccentricities. So far as his political sympathies were concerned, the radical element in Wordsworth was mainly a recognition of the worth of man as man—his personal rights and aspirations, in contrast with the artificial distinctions and differences which separate Society, or break it up.

The letter which Wordsworth wrote in 1816 to James Gray, of Edinburgh, "a friend of Robert Burns," has special importance to posterity from its cordial recognition of the genius of his great predecessor in the roll of British poets, and from its diagnosis of his failings. Few better things have ever been said of Burns than in Wordsworth's poems regarding him, and in this letter.

The political pamphlets issued in 1818, *To the Freeholders of Westmorland*, call for no special remark. They were Conservative addresses, directed against the candidature of Mr. Brougham, subsequently the Lord-Chancellor of England, and in defence of

the Lowther interest. Mr. Brougham was defeated in three Parliamentary contests. When Wordsworth put off his singing robes, and put on those of the partisan, he was not invariably wise; but it is unquestionable that these Addresses contain much political wisdom, altogether independent of party.

In 1829 he wrote a letter to Dr. Blomfield, Bishop of London, on *The Catholic Relief Bill*; and in it we find Wordsworth a contributor to the great Irish controversy. Its keynote is the dictum that the chief cause of Irish misery and ignorance has been "the imperfect conquest of the country."

In an Appendix to his Poems, published in 1835, Wordsworth discussed the subject of *Legislation for the Poor, the Working Classes, and the Clergy*. Under the second head, his vindication of the root-principle of Trades Unions, and the formation of joint-stock companies by the poor, is specially noteworthy.

In the same year he issued, in a more elaborate manner than previously, his *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England*, part of which had originally appeared in 1810, as an introduction to Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumber-*

land, Westmorland, and Lancashire. It had been reprinted several times, and the edition of 1835 was the fifth and final one. Perhaps, on the whole, the finest passages in Wordsworth's Prose are to be found in his description of the Scenery of the Lakes. Certainly no profounder, no more delicately subtle, characterisation of Nature—as seen in that wonderful land of mountain, mere, and stream, “a land of fountains and depths, that spring out of vallies and hills”—is to be found in any previous, or in any subsequent writing. Taken by itself, and apart from all detailed topography, it is by far the best “Guide to the Lakes” that exists. Many extracts from it will be found in this volume.

In 1836 Wordsworth made his one public speech, when laying the foundation-stone of a new school in the village of Bowness. It was printed in the Kendal paper of the day, but calls for no special remark.

Some unpublished letters of Wordsworth have quite recently come to light, from which extracts might have been added in this volume; but it has been thought better that these should be reserved for future use.

It would be an interesting task, although it is

foreign to the aim of this preface, to compare the great poets of Britain, and of the world, as writers of Prose ; and, without going back to earlier times or Literatures, to take our English Milton from the seventeenth century, our Scottish Burns from the eighteenth, Wordsworth, Shelley, Clough, and Matthew Arnold in England from the nineteenth, with Emerson and Lowell from America. This cannot be done at the close of a prefatory note. But it may be said that, so far as Wordsworth's prose-work is concerned, we find (almost invariably) strength, sincerity, insight, and aspiration, — a vision which transcends the common formulæ of the understanding, an upward flight, and at times a *penetrative insight*, to which the ordinary prose-writer does not attain. There is besides a rare balance of the powers of mind and heart, of reason and passion, of intellect imagination and affection, and what may be described as a subtle going and coming amongst these powers, their reciprocal play and endless transformation.

Even as a letter-writer—although in this respect he was excelled by most of his contemporaries, and by many more of his predecessors and successors—Wordsworth sometimes broke

through the trammels which fettered him, whenever he took his pen in hand. It was, as Matthew Arnold put it, as if Nature took the pen from him, and herself wrote down the words, "with bare sheer penetrating power." Every one familiar with his writings knows the wonderful letter which he sent to Lady Beaumont on the destiny of his Poems. The following passage, from a letter to Sir George Beaumont on his own religious creed, is nearly as fine:—

"Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will, the Religion of Gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure, and Gratitude is the handmaid to Hope, and Hope the harbinger of Faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our Species, I lean upon my Friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures—especially the Gospel of St. John—and my creed rises up of itself, with the ease of an exhalation, yet a fabric of adamant."

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

ST. ANDREWS, 1893.

*BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORDSWORTH'S
PROSE WRITINGS.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORDSWORTH'S
PROSE WRITINGS.

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LIST OF THOSE PUBLISHED IN THE POET'S
LIFETIME.

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A Letter to the Bishop of Landaff, on the extraordinary avowal of his Political Principles, contained in the Appendix to his late sermon; by a Republican (1793).

2.

"Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. Second edition (1800).

3.

"Appendix" to *Lyrical Ballads*, on "Poetic Diction." Third edition (1802).

4.

Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other and the Common Enemy at this crisis; and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra. (1809.)

5.

a. Introduction to "Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, by the Reverend Joseph Wilkinson" (1810); expanded into,

b. A Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England, appended to "The River Duddon, a series of Sonnets" (1820).

c. A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England. Third edition, now first published separately (1822).

d. A Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a Description of the Scenery," etc. (1835).

6.

Essay upon Epitaphs, in *The Friend* (1810).

7.

"Preface" to *The Excursion* (1814).

8.

"Preface" to *Poems* (1815), and "Essay Supplementary to the Preface."

9.

A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns (1816).

10.

Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmoreland (1818).

11.

"Postscript" to *Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems* (1836).

12.

Kendal and Windermere Railway. Two letters, reprinted from the Morning Post (1844).

13.

The various "Notes" included in, or appended to, the successive editions of Poems, from 1793 to 1849.

B.

NOTES, AND LETTERS, PUBLISHED SINCE
HIS DEATH.

1.

The "Notes," dedicated to Miss Fenwick in 1843, and published in 1857.

2.

Letters to correspondents; printed in the *Memoirs* (1851); in *Prose Works* (1876). In the *Memorials of Coleorton* (1887), in the *Life of Sir William Rowan Hamilton* (1882-9), in the *Life of William Wordsworth* (1889), and in the *De Quincey Memorials* (1891).

PROSE WRITINGS.

Wordsworth's Prose.

TITLES (1793).¹

ARBITRARY distinctions exist amongst mankind, either from choice or usurpation. I allude to titles, to stars, ribbons, and garters, and other badges of fictitious superiority. I look upon it as my duty to try the propriety of these distinctions, and think it will be no difficult task to prove that these separations among mankind are absurd, impolitic, and immoral. Considering hereditary nobility as a reward for services rendered to the State, what services can a man render to the State adequate to such a compensation that the making of laws, upon which the happiness of millions is to depend, shall be lodged in him and his posterity, however depraved may be their principles, however contemptible their understandings?

¹ From *A Letter to the Bishop of Landaff*.

But here I may be accused of sophistry; I ought to subtract every idea of power from such distinction, though from the weakness of mankind it is impossible to disconnect them. What services, then, can a man render to society to compensate for the outrage done to the dignity of our nature when we bind ourselves to address him and his posterity with humiliating circumlocutions, calling him most noble, most honourable, most high, most august, serene, excellent, eminent, and so forth; when it is more than probable that such unnatural flattery will but generate vices which ought to consign him to neglect and solitude, or make him the perpetual object of the finger of scorn? And does not experience justify the observation, that where titles—a thing very rare—have been conferred as the rewards of merit, those to whom they have descended, far from being thereby animated to imitate their ancestor, have presumed upon that lustre which they supposed thrown round them, and, prodigally relying on such resources, lavished what alone was their own, their personal reputation?

It would be happy if this delusion were confined to themselves; but, alas, the world is weak enough to grant the indulgence which they assume. Vice, which is forgiven in one character, will soon cease to meet with sternness of rebuke when found in others. Even at

first she will entreat pardon with confidence, assured that ere long she will be charitably supposed to stand in no need of it.

But let me ask, from the mode in which these distinctions are originally conferred, is it not almost necessary that, far from being the rewards of services rendered to the State, they should usually be the recompense of an industrious sacrifice of the general welfare to the particular aggrandisement of that power by which they are bestowed? Let us even alter their source, and consider them as proceeding from the Nation itself, and deprived of that hereditary quality; even here I should proscribe them, and for the most evident reason—that a man's past services are no sufficient security for his future character; he who to-day merits the civic wreath may to-morrow deserve the Tarpeian rock. Besides, where respect is not perverted, where the world is not taught to reverence men without regarding their conduct, the esteem of mankind will have a very different value, and, when a proper independence is secured, will be regarded as a sufficient recompense for services however important, and will be a much surer guarantee of the continuance of such virtues as may deserve it.

I have another strong objection to nobility, which is that it has a necessary tendency to dishonour labour, a prejudice which extends

far beyond its own circle ; that it binds down whole ranks of men to idleness, while it gives the enjoyment of a reward which exceeds the hopes of the most active exertions of human industry. The languid tedium of this noble repose must be dissipated, and gaming, with the tricking manœuvres of the horse-race, afford occupation to hours which it would be happy for mankind had they been totally unemployed.

POLITICAL AND MORAL VIRTUES (1793).¹

The obstinacy and perversion of man is such that she is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of Despotism to overthrow him, and, in order to reign in peace, must establish herself by violence. She deploras such stern necessity, but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation. This apparent contradiction between the principles of liberty and the march of revolutions ; this spirit of jealousy, of severity, of disquietude, of vexation, indispensable from a state of war between the oppressors and oppressed, must of necessity confuse the ideas of morality, and contract the benign exertion of the best affections of the human heart. Political virtues are developed at the expense of moral

¹ From *A Letter to the Bishop of Landaff*.

ones; and the sweet emotions of compassion, evidently dangerous when traitors are to be punished, are too often altogether smothered. But is this a sufficient reason to reprobate a convulsion from which is to spring a fairer order of things? It is the province of education to rectify the erroneous notions which a habit of oppression, and even of resistance, may have created, and to soften this ferocity of character, proceeding from a necessary suspension of the mild and social virtues; it belongs to her to create a race of men who, truly free, will look upon their fathers as only enfranchised.

THE HARDRANE WATERFALL (1799).¹

On leaving Askrigg, we turned aside to see another waterfall. It was a beautiful morning, with driving snow showers, which disappeared by fits, and unveiled the east, which was all one delicious pale orange colour. After walking through two small fields we came to a mill, which we passed; and in a moment a sweet little valley opened before us, with an area of grassy ground, and a stream dashing over various laminæ of black rocks close under a bank covered with firs; the bank and stream on

¹ From a letter to Coleridge.

our left, another woody bank on our right, and the flat meadow in front, from which, as at Buttermere, the stream had retired, as it were, to hide itself under the shade. As we walked up this delightful valley we were tempted to look back perpetually on the stream, which reflected the orange lights of the morning among the gloomy rocks, with a brightness varying with the agitation of the current. The steeple of Askrigg was between us and the east, at the bottom of the valley; it was not a quarter of a mile distant, but oh! how far we were from it! The two banks seemed to join before us with a facing of rock common to them both. When we reached this bottom the valley opened out again; two rocky banks on each side, which, hung with ivy and moss, and fringed luxuriantly with brushwood, ran directly parallel to each other, and then approaching with a gentle curve at their point of union, presented a lofty waterfall, the termination of the valley. It was a keen frosty morning, showers of snow threatening us, but the sun bright and active. We had a task of twenty-one miles to perform in a short winter's day. All this put our minds into such a state of excitation, that we were no unworthy spectators of this delightful scene. On a nearer approach the waters seemed to fall down a tall arch, or niche, that had shaped itself by insensible moulderings in the wall of an old castle.

We left this spot with reluctance, but highly exhilarated. When we had walked about a mile and a half, we overtook two men with a string of ponies and some empty carts. I recommended to Dorothy to avail herself of this opportunity of husbanding her strength: we rode with them more than two miles. 'Twas bitter cold, the wind driving the snow behind us in the best style of a mountain storm.

We soon reached an inn at a place called Hardrane, and descending from our vehicles, after warming ourselves by the cottage fire, we walked up the brook-side to take a view of a third waterfall. We had not walked above a few hundred yards between two winding rocky banks, before we came full upon the waterfall, which seemed to throw itself in a narrow line from a lofty wall of rock, the water, which shot manifestly to some distance from the rock, seeming to be dispersed into a thin shower scarcely visible before it reached the bason. We were disappointed in the cascade itself, though the introductory and accompanying banks were an exquisite mixture of grandeur and beauty. We walked up to the fall; and what would I not give if I could convey to you the feelings and images which were then communicated to me? After cautiously sounding our way over stones of all colours and sizes, encased in the clearest water formed by the

spray of the fall, we found the rock, which before had appeared like a wall, extending itself over our heads, like the ceiling of a huge cave, from the summit of which the waters shot directly over our heads into a bason, and among fragments wrinkled over with masses of ice as white as snow, or rather, as Dorothy says, like congealed froth. The water fell at least ten yards from us, and we stood directly behind it, the excavation not so deep in the rock as to impress any feeling of darkness, but lofty and magnificent; but in connection with the adjoining banks excluding as much of the sky as could well be spared from a scene so exquisitely beautiful. The spot where we stood was as dry as the chamber in which I am now sitting, and the incumbent rock, of which the groundwork was limestone, veined and dappled with colours which melted into each other with every possible variety of colour. On the summit of the cave were three festoons, or rather wrinkles, in the rock, run up parallel like the folds of a curtain when it is drawn up. Each of these was hung with icicles of various length, and nearly in the middle of the festoon in the deepest valley of the waves that ran parallel to each other, the stream shot from the rows of icicles in irregular fits of strength, and with a body of water that varied every moment. Sometimes the stream shot into the bason in one continued current;

sometimes it was interrupted almost in the midst of its fall, and was blown towards part of the waterfall at no great distance from our feet like the heaviest thunder-shower. In such a situation you have at every moment a feeling of the presence of the sky. Large fleecy clouds drove over our heads above the rush of the water, and the sky appeared of a blue more than usually brilliant. The rocks on each side, which, joining with the side of this cave, formed the vista of the brook, were chequered with three diminutive waterfalls, or rather courses of water. Each of these was a miniature of all that summer and winter can produce of delicate beauty. The rock in the centre of the falls, where the water was most abundant, a deep black, the adjoining parts yellow, white, purple, and dove-colour, covered with water-plants of the most vivid green, and hung with streaming icicles, that in some places seem to conceal the verdure of the plants, and the violet and yellow variegation of the rocks; and in some places render the colours more brilliant. I cannot express to you the enchanting effect produced by this Arabian scene of colour as the wind blew aside the great waterfall behind which we stood, and alternately hid and revealed each of these fairy cataracts in irregular succession, or displayed them with various gradations of distinctness as the intervening spray was

thickened or dispersed. What a scene, too, in summer! In the luxury of our imagination we could not help feeding upon the pleasure which this cave, in the heat of a July noon, would spread through a frame exquisitely sensible. That huge rock on the right, the bank winding round on the left, with all its living foliage, and the breeze stealing up the valley, and bedewing the cavern with the freshest imaginable spray. And then the murmur of the water, the quiet, the seclusion, and a long summer day.

THE INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS IN
FORMING THE CHARACTER OF NATIONS
(1800).¹

The influence of natural objects in forming the character of Nations cannot be understood without first considering their influence upon men in general, first, with reference to such objects as are common to all countries; and, next, such as belong exclusively to any particular country, or in a greater degree to it than to another. Now it is manifest that no human being can be so besotted and debased by oppression, penury, or any other evil which unhuman-

¹ From a letter to John Wilson (Christopher North).

ises man, as to be utterly insensible to the colours, forms, or smell of flowers, the voices and motions of birds and beasts, the appearances of the sky and heavenly bodies, the general warmth of a fine day, the terror and uncomfortableness of a storm, etc., etc. How dead soever many full-grown men may outwardly seem to these things, all are more or less affected by them ; and in childhood, in the first practice and exercise of their senses, they must have been not the nourishers merely, but often the fathers of their passions. There cannot be a doubt that in tracts of country where images of danger, melancholy, grandeur, or loveliness, softness, and ease prevail, that they will make themselves felt powerfully in forming the characters of the people, so as to produce an uniformity or national character, where the nation is small and is not made up of men who, inhabiting different soils, climates, etc., by their civil usages and relations materially interfere with each other. It was so formerly, no doubt, in the Highlands of Scotland ; but we cannot perhaps observe much of it in our own island at the present day, because, even in the most sequestered places, by manufactures, traffic, religion, law, interchange of inhabitants, etc., distinctions are done away, which would otherwise have been strong and obvious. This complex state of society does not, however, prevent the char-

acters of individuals from frequently receiving a strong bias, not merely from the impressions of general Nature, but also from local objects and images. But it seems that to produce these effects, in the degree in which we frequently find them to be produced, there must be a peculiar sensibility of original organisation combining with moral accidents ; I mean, to produce this in a marked degree ; not that I believe that any man was ever brought up in the country without loving it, especially in his better moments, or in a district of particular grandeur or beauty without feeling some stronger attachment to it on that account than he would otherwise have felt. I include, in these considerations, the influence of climate, changes in the atmosphere and elements, and the labours and occupations which particular districts require.

CUMBRIAN "STATESMEN" (1801).¹

There are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called statesmen, men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are

¹ From a letter to Charles James Fox.

placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power, which these affections will acquire amongst such men, is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing.

THE DECAY OF THE DOMESTIC AFFECTIONS (1801).¹

It appears to me that the most calamitous effect which has followed the measures which have lately been pursued in this country, is a rapid decay of the domestic affections among the lower orders of society. This effect the present rulers of this country are not conscious of, or they disregard it. For many years past,

¹ From a letter to Charles James Fox.

the tendency of society, amongst almost all the nations of Europe, has been to produce it ; but recently, by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, houses of industry, and the invention of soup-shops, etc., superadded to the increasing disproportion between the price of labour and that of the necessaries of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed. The evil would be the less to be regretted, if these institutions were regarded only as palliatives to a disease ; but the vanity and pride of their promoters are so subtly interwoven with them, that they are deemed great discoveries and blessings to humanity. In the meantime, parents are separated from their children, and children from their parents ; the wife no longer prepares, with her own hands, a meal for her husband, the produce of his labour ; there is little doing in his house in which his affections can be interested, and but little left in it that he can love.



THE LYRICAL BALLADS (1802).¹

The principal object proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the

¹ From the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Third Edition.

necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable ; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of Nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived ; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation. . . .

| All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings : and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were

never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

POETRY AND PROSE (1802).¹

It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call

¹ From the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Third Edition.

them Sisters : but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition ? They both speak by and to the same organs ; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree ; Poetry sheds no tears "such as Angels weep," but natural and human tears ; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose ; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POET

(1802).¹

What is a Poet ? To whom does he address himself ? And what language is to be expected from him ?—He is a man speaking to men : a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of

¹ From the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Third Edition.

life that is in him ; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present ; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves :—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

THE POETIC ART (1802).¹

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing : it is so : its object is truth, not individual and

¹ From the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Third Edition.

local, but general and operative ; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion ; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things ; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect ; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love : further, it is a homage paid to the

native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves.

POETRY AND SCIENCE (1802).¹

The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure ; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance ; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor ; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude : the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge ; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakspeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature ; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of

¹ From the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Third Edition.

language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an (atmosphere of sensation) in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. . . . If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. . . .

The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. . . . Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height; and, in order to

excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him.

THE VOCATION OF THE POET (1802).¹

If I had undertaken a systematic defence of the theory here maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin: it is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude are

¹ From the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Third Edition.

perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of metre, and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions,

if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S DISCOURSES

(1804).¹

The sound judgment universally displayed in these Discourses is truly admirable,—I mean the deep conviction of the necessity of unwearied labour and diligence, the reverence for the great

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

men of his art, and the comprehensive and unexclusive character of his taste. Is it not a pity that a man with such a high sense of the *dignity* of his art, and with such industry, should not have given more of his time to the nobler departments of painting? I do not say this so much on account of what the world would have gained by the superior excellence and interest of his pictures, though doubtless that would have been very considerable, but for the sake of example. It is such an animating sight to see a man of genius, regardless of temporary gains, whether of money or praise, fixing his attention solely upon what is intrinsically interesting and permanent, and finding his happiness in an entire devotion of himself to such pursuits as shall most ennoble human nature. We have not yet seen enough of this in modern times; and never was there a period in society when such examples were likely to do more good than at present. The industry and love of truth which distinguish Sir Joshua's mind are most admirable; but he appears to me to have lived too much for the age in which he lived, and the people among whom he lived, though this in an infinitely less degree than his friend Burke, of whom Goldsmith said, with such truth, long ago, that,

Born for the universe, he narrowed his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.

. . . The weather has been most glorious, and the country, of course, most delightful. Our own valley in particular was last night, by the light of the full moon, and in the perfect stillness of the lake, a scene of loveliness and repose as affecting as was ever beheld by the eye of man.

THE MOSS-HUT, DOVE COTTAGE (1804).¹

We have lately built in our little rocky orchard a circular hut, lined with moss, like a wren's nest, and coated on the outside with heath, that stands most charmingly, with several views from the different sides of it, of the Lake, the Valley, and the Church—sadly spoiled, however, lately by being white-washed. The little retreat is most delightful, and I am sure you and Lady Beaumont would be highly pleased with it. Coleridge has never seen it. What a happiness would it be to us to see him there, and entertain you all next summer in our homely way under its shady thatch! I will copy a dwarf inscription which I wrote for it the other day, before the building was entirely finished, which indeed it is not yet.

No whimsey of the purse is here,
No pleasure-house forlorn;

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

Use, comfort, do this roof endear ;
A tributary shed to cheer
The little cottage that is near,
To help it and adorn.

THE PRELUDE (1805).¹

I have wished to write to you every day this long time, but I have also had another wish, which has interfered to prevent me ; I mean the wish to resume my poetical labours : time was stealing away fast from me and nothing done, and my mind still seeming unfit to do anything. At first I had a strong impulse to write a poem that should record my brother's virtues, and be worthy of his memory. I began to give vent to my feelings, with this view, but I was overpowered by my subject, and could not proceed. I composed much, but it is all lost except a few lines, as it came from me in such a torrent that I was unable to remember it. I could not hold the pen myself, and the subject was such that I could not employ Mrs. Wordsworth or my sister as my amanuensis. This work must therefore rest a while till I am something calmer ; I shall, however, never be at peace till, as far as in me lies, I have done justice to my departed brother's memory. His

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

heroic death (the particulars of which I have now accurately collected from several of the survivors), exacts this from me, and still more his singularly interesting character, and virtuous and innocent life.

Unable to proceed with this work, I turned my thoughts again to the Poem on my own Life, and you will be glad to hear that I have added 300 lines to it in the course of last week. Two books more will conclude it. It will be not much less than 9000 lines,—not hundred but thousand lines long,—an alarming length! and a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit, as you will know well, that has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers. Here, at least, I hoped that to a certain degree I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought; therefore could not easily be bewildered. This might certainly have been done in narrower compass by a man of more address; but I have done my best. If, when the work shall be finished, it appears to the judicious to have redundancies, they shall be lopped off, if possible; but this is very difficult to do, when a man has written with thought; and this defect, whenever I have suspected it,

or found it to exist in any writings of mine, I have always found incurable. The fault lies too deep, and is in the first conception. If you see Coleridge before I do, do not speak of this to him, as I should like to have his judgment unpreoccupied by such an apprehension.

THE MOSS-HUT, AND THE COMPLETION OF
THE PRELUDE (1805).¹

I write to you from the moss-hut at the top of my orchard, the sun just sinking behind the hills in front of the entrance, and his light falling upon the green moss of the side opposite me. A linnet is singing in the tree above, and the children of some of our neighbours, who have been to-day little John's visitors, are playing below equally noisy and happy. The green fields in the level area of the vale, and part of the lake, lie before me in quietness. I have just been reading two newspapers, full of factious brawls about Lord Melville and his delinquencies, ravage of the French in the West Indies, victories of the English in the East, fleets of ours roaming the sea in search of enemies whom they cannot find, etc., etc., etc.; and I have asked myself more than once lately,

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

if my affections can be in the right place, caring as I do so little about what the world seems to care so much for. All this seems to me, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." It is pleasant in such a mood to turn one's thoughts to a good man and a dear friend. I have, therefore, taken up the pen to write to you.

I have the pleasure to say that I finished my poem about a fortnight ago. I had looked forward to the day as a most happy one; and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work, such as it is. But it was not a happy day for me; I was dejected on many accounts: when I looked back upon the performance, it seemed to have a dead weight about it,—the reality so far short of the expectation. It was the first long labour that I had finished; and the doubt whether I should ever live to write "The Recluse," and the sense which I had of this poem being so far below what I seemed capable of executing, depressed me much; above all, many heavy thoughts of my poor departed brother hung upon me, the joy which I should have had in showing him the manuscript, and a thousand other vain fancies and dreams. I have spoken of this, because it was a state of feeling new to me, the occasion being new. This work may be considered as a sort of *portico* to "The Recluse," part of the same

building, which I hope to be able, ere long, to begin with in earnest ; and if I am permitted to bring it to a conclusion, and to write, further, a narrative poem of the epic kind, I shall consider the task of my life as over. I ought to add, that I have the satisfaction of finding the present poem not quite of so alarming a length as I apprehended.

ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDENING (1805).¹

Painters and poets have had the credit of being reckoned the fathers of English gardening ; they will also have, hereafter, the better praise of being fathers of a better taste. Error is in general nothing more than getting hold of good things, as every thing has two handles, by the wrong one. It was a misconception of the meaning and principles of poets and painters which gave countenance to the modern system of gardening, which is now, I hope, on the decline ; in other words, we are submitting to the rule which you at present are guided by, that of having our houses belong to the country, which will of course lead us back to the simplicity of Nature. And leaving your own individual sentiments and present work out of the question, what good can come of any other

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

guide, under any circumstances? We have, indeed, distinctions of rank, hereditary legislators, and large landed proprietors; but from numberless causes the state of society is so much altered, that nothing of that lofty or imposing interest, formerly attached to large property in land, can now exist; none of the poetic pride, and pomp, and circumstance; nor anything that can be considered as making amends for violation done to the holiness of Nature. Let us take an extreme case, such as a residence of a Duke of Norfolk, or Northumberland: of course you would expect a mansion, in some degree answerable to their consequence, with all conveniences. The names of Howard and Percy will always stand high in the regards of Englishmen; but it is degrading, not only to such families as these, but to every really interesting one, to suppose that their importance will be most felt where most displayed, particularly in the way I am now alluding to. This is contracting a general feeling into a local one. Besides, were it not so, as to what concerns the Past, a man would be sadly astray, who should go, for example, to modernise Alnwick and its dependencies, with his head full of the ancient Percies: he would find nothing there which would remind him of them, except by contrast; and of that kind of admonition he would, indeed, have enough. But this by-the-

bye, for it is against the principle itself I am contending, and not the misapplication of it. After what was said above, I may ask, if anything connected with the families of Howard and Percy, and their rank and influence, and thus with the state of government and society, could, in the present age, be deemed a recompense for their thrusting themselves in between us and Nature. Surely it is a substitution of little things for great when we would put a whole country into a nobleman's livery. I know nothing which to me would be so pleasing or affecting, as to be able to say when I am in the midst of a large estate—This man is not the victim of his condition ; he is not the spoiled child of worldly grandeur ; the thought of himself does not take the lead in his enjoyments ; he is, where he ought to be, lowly-minded, and has human feelings ; he has a true relish of simplicity, and therefore stands the best chance of being happy ; at least, without it there is no happiness, because there can be no true sense of the bounty and beauty of the creation, or insight into the constitution of the human mind. Let a man of wealth and influence show, by the appearance of the country in his neighbourhood, that he treads in the steps of the good sense of the age, and occasionally goes foremost ; let him give countenance to improvements in agriculture, steering clear of the pedantry of it, and

showing that its grossest utilities will connect themselves harmoniously with the more intellectual arts, and even thrive the best under such connection ; let him do his utmost to be surrounded with tenants living comfortably, which will always bring with it the best of all graces which a country can have—flourishing fields and happy-looking houses ; and, in that part of his estate devoted to park and pleasure-ground, let him keep himself as much out of sight as possible ; let Nature be all in all, taking care that everything done by man shall be in the way of being adopted by her. If people choose that a great mansion should be the chief figure in a country, let this kind of keeping prevail through the picture, and true taste will find no fault. . . .

The manufactured walk, which was absolutely necessary in many places, will in one place pass through a few hundred yards of forest ground, and will there efface the most beautiful specimen of a forest pathway ever seen by human eyes, and which I have paced many an hour, when I was a youth, with some of those I best love. This path winds on under the trees with the wantonness of a river or a living creature ; and even if I may say so with the subtlety of a spirit, contracting or enlarging itself, visible or invisible as it likes. There is a continued opening between the trees, a narrow slip of

green turf besprinkled with flowers, chiefly daisies, and here it is, if I may use the same kind of language, that this pretty path plays its pranks, wearing away the turf and flowers at its pleasure. When I took the walk I was speaking of, last summer, it was Sunday. I met several of the people of the country posting to and from church, in different parts; and in a retired spot by the river-side were two musicians (belonging probably to some corps of volunteers) playing upon the hautboy and clarionet. You may guess I was not a little delighted; I may say, brought back to my subject, which is this,—that all just and solid pleasure in natural objects rests upon two pillars, God and Man. Laying out grounds, as it is called, may be considered as a liberal art, in some sort like poetry and painting; and its object, like that of all the liberal arts, is, or ought to be, to move the affections under the control of good sense; that is, of the best and wisest. Speaking with more precision, it is to assist Nature in moving the affections, and surely, as I have said, the affections of those who have the deepest perception of the beauty of Nature, who have the most valuable feelings—that is, the most permanent, the most independent, the most ennobling, connected with Nature and human life. No liberal art aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class: the painter or poet is degraded

in proportion as he does so ; the true servants of the Arts pay homage to the human kind as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds. If this be so when we are merely putting together words or colours, how much more ought the feeling to prevail when we are in the midst of the realities of things ; of the beauty and harmony, of the joy and happiness, of living creatures ; of men and children, of birds and beasts, of hills and streams, and trees and flowers ; with the changes of night and day, evening and morning, summer and winter ; and all their unwearied actions and energies, as benign in the spirit that animates them as they are beautiful and grand in that form and clothing which is given to them for the delight of our senses ! But I must stop, for you feel these things as deeply as I ; more deeply, if it were only for this, that you have lived longer. What then shall we say of many great mansions with their unqualified expulsion of human creatures from their neighbourhood, happy or not, houses which do what is fabled of the upas-tree?—that they breathe out death and desolation ! I know you will feel with me here, both as a man, and a lover and professor of the Arts. I was glad to hear from Lady Beaumont that you did not think of removing your village. Of course much here will depend upon circumstances ; above all, with what kind of inhabitants, from

the nature of the employments in that district, the village is likely to be stocked. But for my part, strip my neighbourhood of human beings, and I should think it one of the greatest privations I could undergo. You have all the poverty of solitude, nothing of its elevation. In a word, if I were disposed to write a sermon (and this is something like one) upon the subject of taste in natural beauty, I should take for my text the little pathway in Lowther Woods, and all which I had to say would begin and end in the human heart, as under the direction of the Divine Nature, conferring value on the objects of the senses, and pointing out what is valuable in them.

LORD NELSON (1806).¹

The state of Lord Nelson's health, I suppose, was such that he could not have lived long; and the first burst of exultation upon landing in his native country, and his reception here, would have been dearly bought, perhaps, by pain and bodily weakness, and distress among his friends, which he could neither remove nor alleviate. Few men have ever died under circumstances so likely to make their death of benefit to their country: it is not easy to see what his life could

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

have done comparable to it. The loss of such men as Lord Nelson is, indeed, great and real; but surely not for the reason which makes most people grieve—a supposition that no other such man is in the country. The old ballad has taught us how to feel on these occasions:

I trust I have within my realm
Five hundred good as he.

But this is the evil, that nowhere is merit so much under the power of what (to avoid a more serious expression) one may call that of fortune, as in military and naval service; and it is five hundred to one that such men will not have attained situations where they can show themselves, so that the country may know in whom to trust. Lord Nelson had attained that situation; and, therefore, I think (and not for the other reason), ought we chiefly to lament that he is taken from us.

THE WINTER GARDEN AT COLEORTON (1806).¹

Before I explain my ideas I must entreat your patience. I promise you I will be as brief as may be, but, meaning to be minute, I fear I shall be tiresome. First, then, to begin with the

¹ From a letter to Lady Beaumont.

boundary line. Suppose ourselves standing upon the terrace above the new-built wall: *that*, of course, would be open, and we should look down from it upon the garden, and, winding round upon the left bank, I would plant upon the top of it, in the field, a line of evergreen shrubs intermingled with cypress, to take place of the present *hedges*; and, behind these, a row of firs, such as were likely to grow to the most majestic height. This kind of fence, leaving visible such parts of the cottages as would have the best effect (I mean the beautiful one with ivy, and the other, which is of a very picturesque form, but very shabby surface), I would continue all round the garden, so as to give it the greatest appearance of depth, shelter, and seclusion possible. This is essential to the *feeling* of the place, with which, indeed, I ought to have begun: and that is of a spot which the winter cannot touch, which should present no image of chilliness, decay, or desolation, when the face of Nature everywhere else is cold, decayed, and desolate. On this account, keeping strictly to the example of the winter garden in the *Spectator*, I should certainly exclude all deciduous trees, whatever variety and brilliancy of colour their foliage might give at certain seasons intermingled with the evergreens, because I think a sufficiency of the same effect may be produced by other means, which would jar less with what

should never be out of mind, the sentiment of the place. We will, then, suppose the garden to be shut up within this double and tall fence of evergreen shrubs and trees. Do you remember the lines with which Thomson concludes his *Ode on Solitude*?—

Oh ! let me pierce thy secret cell,
And in thy deep recesses dwell ;
Perhaps from Norwood's oak-clad hill,
When Meditation has her fill,
I just may cast my careless eyes
Where London's spiry turrets rise,
Think of its crimes, its cares, its pain,
Then shield me in the woods again.

In conformity to the spirit of these beautiful lines, I would make one opening, but scarcely more, in this boundary fence, which should present the best view of the most interesting *distant* object.

Having now done with the double evergreen fence, we will begin again with the wall ; and, first, let me say that this wall with its recesses, buttresses, and towers, I very much admire. It should be covered here and there with ivy and pyracanthus (which probably you know), or any other winter plants that bear scarlet berries, or are rich and luxuriant in their leaves and manner of growing. From the wall, going round by the left, the first thing we meet is a mound of rubbish which should be planted.

Then, before we reach the ivied cottage, we come to a perpendicular bank or scar; this should be planted along the top, in addition to the double evergreen fence mentioned before, with ivy, periwinkle, and other beautiful or brilliant evergreen trailing plants, which should hang down and leave the earth visible in different places. From the *sides* of the bank also might start juniper and yew, and it might be sprinkled over with primroses. Coming to the second cottage, this—if not entirely taken away—should be repaired, so as to have nothing of a patchy and worn-out appearance, as it has at present, and planted with ivy; this, and the shrubs and trees, hereafter to conceal so much of the naked wall, as almost to leave it doubtful whether it be a cottage or not. I do not think that these two cottages would in an unwelcome manner break in upon the feeling of seclusion, if no window looking directly upon the garden be allowed. This second cottage is certainly not *necessary*, and if it were not here nobody would wish for it; but its irregular and picturesque form, its tall chimney in particular, plead strongly with me for its being retained. I scarcely ever saw a building of its size which would show off ivy to greater advantage. If retained—which with a view to *what it is to become* I should certainly advise,—it ought to be repaired, and made as little unsightly in its surface as possible, till the

trailing plants shall have overspread it. At first I was for taking this cottage away, as it is in such ruinous plight, but now I cannot reconcile myself to the thought;—I have such a beautiful image in my mind of what it would be as a supporter to a grove of ivy, anywhere beautiful, but particularly so in a winter garden; therefore let it stand.

Following the fence round, we come to the remains of the little quarry (for such I suppose the excavation to be, nearly under the wych-elm cottage); I would scratch the bank here, so as to lay bare more of the sand rock, and that in as bold a way as could be done. This rock, or *scar*, like the one before mentioned, I would adorn with trailing plants, and juniper, box, and yew-tree, where a very scanty growth would soon show itself. The next part of the fence we come to in its present state is an unsightly corner, where is an old ugly wall (made still uglier with nettles and rubbish) which has been built to prevent the bank from falling in. Here I would plant, to cover this wall, a hedge of hollies, or some other evergreen, which should not be suffered to grow wildly, but be cropped, making a wall of verdure to ascend up to the roots of the fir-trees that are to be planted upon the top of the bank. This form of boundary would here revive the artificial character of the place in a pleasing way, preparing for a return to the new

stone wall; the parts of the whole boundary thus, as you will perceive, either melting into each other quietly, or forming spirited contrasts. I must however not forget here that there is a space of boundary between this unsightly corner (where I would have the holly hedge) and the new stone wall; and this space would be diversified, first by the steps which now descend into the garden, and next, and most beautifully, by a conception which I have of bringing the water—which I am told may be done without much expense—and letting it trickle down the bank about the roots of the wych elm, so as to make, if not a waterfall (there might not be enough for that), at least a dripping of water, round which might gather and flourish some of those vivid masses of water-plants, a refreshing and beautiful sight in the dead time of the year, and which, when cased in ice, form one of the most enchanting appearances that are peculiar to winter.

In order to be clear I wish to be methodical, at the risk, as I forewarned you, of being tedious. We will therefore begin with the wall once more. This, as the most artificial, ought to be the most splendid and ornamental part of the garden; and here I would have, betwixt the path and the wall, a border edged with boxwood, to receive the earliest and latest flowers. Within and close to the edging of boxwood, I

would first plant a row of snowdrops, and behind that a row of crocus ; these would succeed each other. Close under the wall I would have a row, or fringe, of white lilies, and in front of this another of daffodils ; these also would succeed each other, the daffodils coming first ; the middle part of the border, which must be of good width, to be richly tufted, or bedded over with hepatica, jonquils, hyacinths, polyanthus, auriculas, mezereon, and other spring flowers, and shrubs that blossom early ; and, for the autumn, Michaelmas-daisy, winter-cherry, china-asters, Michaelmas and Christmas rose, and many other shrubs and flowers. I mentioned before what I would wish to have done with the wall itself. The path of which I have been speaking should wind round the garden mostly near the boundary line, which would in general be seen or felt as has been described ; but not always, for in some places, particularly near the high-road, it would be kept out of sight, so that the imagination might have room to play. It might perhaps with propriety lead along a second border under the clipped holly hedge ; everywhere else it should only be accompanied by wild-flowers.

We have done with the circumference ; now for the interior, which I would diversify in the following manner. And to begin, as before, with the wall : this fronts nearly south, and a

considerable space before it ought to be open to the sun, forming a glade, enclosed on the north side by the wall; on the east, by a ridge of rubbish to be planted with shrubs, trees, and flowers; on the west by another little long hillock, or ridge of the same kind; and on the south by a line of evergreen shrubs, to run from the southern extremities of the ridges, and to be broken by one or two trees of the cypress kind, which would spire up without excluding the sun from the glade. This I should call the first compartment of the garden, to be characterised by ornament of architecture as in the wall, by showiness and splendour of colours in the flowers (which would be chiefly garden flowers), and in the choice of the shrubs. In this glade,—if the plan of bringing the water should not be found impracticable, or too expensive,—I would have a stone fountain of simple structure to throw out its stream or even *thread* of water; the stone-work would accord with the wall, and the sparkling water would be in harmony with the bright hues of the flowers and blossoms, and would form a lively contrast to the sober colours of the evergreens, while the murmur in a district where the sound of water (if we except the little trickling that is to be under the wych elm) is nowhere else heard, could not but be soothing and delightful. Shall I venture to say here, by-the-bye, that I am old-fashioned enough

to like in certain places even *jets d'eau*; I do not mean merely in towns, and among buildings, where I think they always are pleasing, but also among rural scenes where water is scarce. They certainly make a great show out of a little substance, and the diamond drops of light which they scatter round them, and the halos and rainbows which the misty vapour shows in sunshine, and the dewy freshness which it seems to spread through the air, are all great recommendations of them to me; so much so, that, for myself, I should not be ashamed of seeing one here, if a fountain, which is a thing of more simplicity and dignity, would not answer every important purpose, and be quite unobjectionable. If we had a living stream bustling through rocks, as at Grace Dieu, and could decoy it among our evergreens, I should not think either of fountain or *jets d'eau*; but, alas! Coleorton is in no favour with the Naiads.

The next compartment (if you look at the accompanying plan you will clearly understand me) is to be a glade unelaborate and simple, surrounded with evergreens, and a few scattered in the middle. *N.B.*—The former glade to be entirely open with the fountain; and of this second glade so much of the ancient cottage as could be shown with effect would be the presiding image. No border or garden flowers here, but wild-flowers to be scattered every-

where. Then (still look at the plan) we come to a dark thicket or grove, the path winding through it, under the other cottage; then the path crosses the outlet where the door leads into the high-road, which door ought to be entirely concealed, and led to under a thick arch of evergreen.

Proceeding with the paths, we cross the end of a long alley, of which I shall speak afterwards. We then are brought to a small glade or open space, belted round with evergreens, quite unvaried and secluded. In this little glade should be a basin of water inhabited by two gold or silver fish, if they will live in this climate all the year in the open air; if not, any others of the most radiant colours that are more hardy: these little creatures to be the "genii" of the pool and of the place. This spot should be as monotonous in the colour of the trees as possible. The enclosure of evergreen, the sky above, the green grass floor, and the two mute inhabitants, the only images it should present, unless here and there a solitary wild-flower. From this glade the path leads on through a few yards of dark thicket, and we come to the little quarry, and this (adopting an idea of yours, which I had from Mr. Craig, and which pleases me much) I should fill with a pool of water that would reflect beautifully the rocks with their hanging plants, the evergreens upon

the top, and, shooting deeper than all, the naked spire of the church. The path would wind along on one side of the pool under the ridge of rubbish, the slope of which should be bare and grassy (if it will not in its present state grow smooth grass it should be seeded for that purpose). It should be planted only on the top, and with trees that would grow to the greatest height, in order to give the recess as much depth as possible.

You would appear to be shut up within this bottom, till, turning with the path round a rocky projection of the mound of rubbish, you are fronted by a flight of steps, not before visible, which will be made to bring you out of the quarry close under the clipt holly hedge spoken of before. Here you open into a large glade, one side formed by the trees on the mound of rubbish, the other by the holly hedge, and still further by those other steps near the wych-elm cottage, which now lead down into the garden; these steps, not visible till you come at them, and still further on by the principal object in the glade, the waterfall, for so I will call it, from the root of the wych elm.

Having passed through this glade, you go on a few steps through a thicket, and before you come to the new-built wall you cross the other end of the alley spoken of before,—this alley

to run down from the boundary path the whole length of the garden in this part, as you will see in the plan. The alley to be quite straight, the ground perfectly level, shaded with evergreens; laurels I think the best, as they grow tall and so much faster than any other evergreen I know; the floor not gravelled, but green, which, when the trees overshadow the walk, would become mossy, so that the whole would be still, unvaried, and cloistral, soothing and not stirring the mind, or tempting it out of itself. The upper end of this alley should appear to be closed in by trees, the lower to be terminated by a rising bank of green turf which would catch the light, and present a cheerful image of sunshine; as it would always appear to do, whether the sun shone or not, to a person walking in the alley when the vista shall have become a complete shade.

Out of this alley, towards the middle of it, on the left side, should be a small blind path leading to a bower, such as you will find described in the beginning of Chaucer's poem of *The Flower and the Leaf*, and also in the beginning of the *Assembly of Ladies*. This little parlour of verdure should be paved with different-coloured pebbles, chiefly white, which are to be found in great plenty sprinkling the sandy roads of this country; these wrought into a careless mosaic would contrast livelily, if the

white were predominant, with the evergreen walls and ceiling of this apartment. All around should be a mossed seat, and a small stone table in the midst. I am at a loss what trees to choose for this bower. Hollies (which would be clipped in the inside, so that the prickles would be no annoyance) I should like best, but they grow so slowly.

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN (1806).¹

Formerly, indeed till within these few years, children were very carelessly brought up; at present they too early and too habitually feel their own importance, from the solicitude and unremitting attendance which is bestowed upon them. A child like yours, I believe, unless under the wisest guidance, would prosper most where she was the least noticed and the least made of; I mean more than this where she received the least cultivation. She does not stand in need of the stimulus of praise (as much as can benefit her, *i.e.* as much as her nature requires, it will be impossible to withhold from her); nor of being provoked to exertion, or, even if she be not injudiciously thwarted, to industry. Nor can there be any need to be *sedulous* in calling out

¹ From a letter to a friend.

her affections ; her own lively enjoyments will do all this for her, and also point out what is to be done to her. But take all the pains you can, she will be too much noticed. Other evils will also beset her, arising more from herself ; and how are these to be obviated ? . . .

Assuredly, not by mortifying her, which is the course commonly pursued with such tempers ; nor by preaching to her about her own defects ; nor by overrunning her infancy with books about good boys and girls, and bad boys and girls, and all that trumpery ; but (and this is the only important thing I have to say upon the subject) by putting her in the way of acquiring without measure or limit such knowledge as will lead her out of herself, such knowledge as is interesting for its own sake ; things known because they are interesting, not interesting because they are known ; in a word, by leaving her at liberty to luxuriate in such feelings and images as will feed her mind in silent pleasure. This nourishment is contained in fairy tales, romances, the best biographies and histories, and such parts of natural history relating to the powers and appearances of the earth and elements, and the habits and structure of animals, as belong to it, not as an art or science, but as a magazine of form and feeling. This kind of knowledge is purely good, a direct antidote to every evil to be apprehended, and food abso-

lutely necessary to preserve the mind of a child like yours from morbid appetites. Next to these objects comes such knowledge as, while it is chiefly interesting for its own sake, admits the fellowship of another sort of pleasure, that of complacency from the conscious exertion of the faculties and love of praise. The accomplishments of dancing, music, and drawing, rank under this head; grammar, learning of languages, botany probably, and out-of-the-way knowledge of arts and manufactures, etc. The second class of objects, as far as they tend to feed vanity and self-conceit, are evil; but let them have their just proportion in the plan of education, and they will afterwards contribute to destroy these, by furnishing the mind with power and independent gratification: the vanity will disappear, and the good will remain.

THE DESTINY OF HIS POEMS (1807).¹

It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from

¹ From a letter to Lady Beaumont.

door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton? In a word—for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me—what have they to do with endless talking about things nobody cares anything for except as far as their own vanity is concerned, and this with persons they care nothing for but as their vanity or *selfishness* is concerned?—what have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.

It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by

making the happy happier ; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous ; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. . . .

Again, turn to the "Moods of my own Mind." There is scarcely a poem here of above thirty lines, and very trifling these poems will appear to many ; but, omitting to speak of them individually, do they not, taken collectively, fix the attention upon a subject eminently poetical, viz., the interest which objects in Nature derive from the predominance of certain affections, more or less permanent, more or less capable of salutary renewal in the mind of the being contemplating these objects ? This is poetic, and essentially poetic. And why ? Because it is creative. . . .

There is scarcely one of my poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution. For instance, in the present case, who is there that has not felt that the mind can have no rest among a multitude of objects, of which it either cannot make one whole, or from which it cannot single out one individual, whereupon may be concentrated the attention, divided among or dis-

tracted by a multitude? After a certain time, we must either select one image or object, which must put out of view the rest wholly, or must subordinate them to itself while it stands forth as a head :

How glowed the firmament
With living sapphires ! Hesperus, that *led*
The starry host, rode brightest ; till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
Apparent *Queen*, unveiled *her peerless* light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Having laid this down as a general principle, take the case before us. I am represented in the sonnet as casting my eyes over the sea, sprinkled with a multitude of ships, like the heavens with stars. My mind may be supposed to float up and down among them, in a kind of dreamy indifference with respect either to this or that one, only in a pleasurable state of feeling with respect to the whole prospect. "Joyously it showed." This continued till that feeling may be supposed to have passed away, and a kind of comparative listlessness or apathy to have succeeded, as at this line,

Some veering up and down, one knew not why.

All at once, while I am in this state, comes forth an object, an individual ; and my mind,

sleepy and unfixed, is awakened and fastened in a moment.

Hesperus, that *led*
The starry host,

is a poetical object, because the glory of his own nature gives him the pre-eminence the moment he appears. He calls forth the poetic faculty, receiving its exertions as a tribute. But this ship in the sonnet may, in a manner still more appropriate, be said to come upon a mission of the poetic spirit, because, in its own appearance and attributes, it is barely sufficiently distinguished to rouse the creative faculty of the human mind, to exertions at all times welcome, but doubly so when they come upon us when in a state of remissness. The mind being once fixed and roused, all the rest comes from itself; it is merely a lordly ship, nothing more :

This ship was nought to me, nor I to her,
Yet I pursued her with a lover's look.

My mind wantons with grateful joy in the exercise of its own powers, and, loving its own creation,

This ship to all the rest I did prefer,

making her a sovereign or a regent, and thus giving body and life to all the rest; mingling up this idea with fondness and praise—

where she comes the winds must stir ;

and concluding the whole with

On went she, and due north her journey took ;

thus taking up again the reader with whom I began, letting him know how long I must have watched this favourite vessel, and inviting him to rest his mind as mine is resting.

Having said so much upon mere fourteen lines, which Mrs. Fermor did not approve, I cannot but add a word or two upon my satisfaction in finding that my mind has so much in common with hers, and that we participate so many of each other's pleasures. I collect this from her having singled out the two little poems, "The Daffodils," and "The Rock crowned with Snow-drops." I am sure that whoever is much pleased with either of these quiet and tender delineations must be fitted to walk through the recesses of my poetry with delight, and will there recognise, at every turn, something or other in which, and over which, it has that property and right which knowledge and love confer. The line,

Come, blessed barrier, etc.,

in the Sonnet upon "Sleep," which Mrs. F. points out, had before been mentioned to me by Coleridge, and, indeed, by almost everybody

who had heard it, as eminently beautiful. My letter (as this second sheet, which I am obliged to take, admonishes me) is growing to an enormous length; and yet, saving that I have expressed my calm confidence that these poems will live, I have said nothing which has a particular application to the object of it, which was to remove all disquiet from your mind on account of the condemnation they may at present incur from that portion of my contemporaries who are called the public. I am sure, my dear Lady Beaumont, if you attach any importance to it, it can only be from an apprehension that it may affect me, upon which I have already set you at ease; or from a fear that this present blame is ominous of their future or final destiny. If this be the case, your tenderness for me betrays you. Be assured that the decision of these persons has nothing to do with the question; they are altogether incompetent judges. These people, in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them, that they may talk about them. And even if this were not so, never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise

and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy, and misguided, and misleading beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be a work *of time*. To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings; and, after what I have said, I am sure yours will be the same. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.

THE POET AND POSTERITY (1807).¹

Let the poet first consult his own heart, as I have done, and leave the rest to posterity,—to, I hope, an improving posterity. The fact is, the English *public* are at this moment in the same state of mind with respect to my poems, if small things may be compared with great, as the

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

French are in respect to Shakspeare, and not the French alone, but almost the whole Continent. Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing.

FLEET STREET AND ST. PAUL'S IN WINTER
(1808).¹

My heart has been so occupied since my return with my own family that I have scarcely greeted or noticed the beautiful vale in which we live, and our sheltering mountains; but this is a pleasure to come. You will deem it strange, but really some of the imagery of London has, since my return hither, been more present to my mind than that of this noble vale. I left Cole-ridge at seven o'clock on Sunday morning, and walked towards the City in a very thoughtful and melancholy state of mind. I had passed through Temple Bar and by St. Dunstan's, noticing nothing, and entirely occupied with my own thoughts, when, looking up, I saw before me the avenue of Fleet Street, silent, empty, and pure white, with a sprinkling of new-fallen snow, not a cart or carriage to obstruct the view, no noise, only a few soundless and dusky foot-

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

passengers here and there. You remember the elegant line of the curve of Ludgate Hill in which this avenue would terminate, and beyond, and towering above it, was the huge and majestic form of St. Paul's, solemnised by a thin veil of falling snow. I cannot say how much I was affected at this unthought-of sight in such a place, and what a blessing I felt there is in habits of exalted imagination. My sorrow was controlled, and my uneasiness of mind—not quieted and relieved altogether—seemed at once to receive the gift of an anchor of security.

PROGRESS OF HUMAN NATURE, ETC.¹

There are two errors into which we easily slip when thinking of past times. One lies in forgetting in the excellence of what remains the large overbalance of worthlessness that has been swept away. Ranging over the wide tracts of antiquity, the situation of the mind may be likened to that of a traveller in some unpeopled part of America, who is attracted to the burial-place of one of the primitive inhabitants. It is conspicuous upon an eminence, "a mount upon a mount!" He digs into it, and finds that it contains the bones of a man of mighty stature;

¹ From an answer to the letter of Mathetes in *The Friend* (1809).

and he is tempted to give way to a belief, that as there were giants in those days, so all men were giants. But a second and wiser thought may suggest to him that this tomb would never have forced itself upon his notice, if it had not contained a body that was distinguished from others,—that of a man who had been selected as a chieftain or ruler for the very reason that he surpassed the rest of his tribe in stature, and who now lies thus conspicuously inhumed upon the mountain-top, while the bones of his followers are laid unobtrusively together in their burrows upon the plain below. The second habitual error is, that in this comparison of ages we divide time merely into past and present, and place these in the balance to be weighed against each other ; not considering that the present is in our estimation not more than a period of thirty years, or half a century at most, and that the past is a mighty accumulation of many such periods, perhaps the whole of recorded time, or at least the whole of that portion of it in which our own country has been distinguished. We may illustrate this by the familiar use of the words ancient and modern, when applied to poetry. What can be more inconsiderate or unjust than to compare a few existing writers with the whole succession of their progenitors ? The delusion, from the moment that our thoughts are directed to it, seems too gross to

deserve mention ; yet men will talk for hours upon poetry, balancing against each other the words ancient and modern, and be unconscious that they have fallen into it.

These observations are not made as implying a dissent from the belief of my correspondent, that the moral spirit and intellectual powers of this country are declining ; but to guard against unqualified admiration, even in cases where admiration has been rightly fixed, and to prevent that depression which must necessarily follow, where the notion of the peculiar unfavourableness of the present times to dignity of mind has been carried too far. For in proportion as we imagine obstacles to exist out of ourselves to retard our progress, will, in fact, our progress be retarded. Deeming, then, that in all ages an ardent mind will be baffled and led astray in the manner under contemplation, though in various degrees, I shall at present content myself with a few practical and desultory comments upon some of those general causes, to which my correspondent justly attributes the errors in opinion, and the lowering or deadening of sentiment, to which ingenuous and aspiring youth is exposed. And first, for the heart-cheering belief in the perpetual progress of the species towards a point of unattainable perfection. If the present age do indeed transcend the past in what is most beneficial and honourable, he that

perceives this, being in no error, has no cause for complaint ; but if it be not so, a youth of genius might, it should seem, be preserved from any wrong influence of this faith by an insight into a simple truth, namely, that it is not necessary, in order to satisfy the desires of our nature, or to reconcile us to the economy of providence, that there should be at all times a continuous advance in what is of highest worth. In fact it is not, as a writer of the present day has admirably observed, in the power of fiction to portray in words, or of the imagination to conceive in spirit, actions or characters of more exalted virtue, than those which thousands of years ago have existed upon earth, as we know from the records of authentic history. Such is the inherent dignity of human nature, that there belong to it sublimities of virtues which all men may attain, and which no man can transcend : and though this be not true in an equal degree of intellectual power, yet in the persons of Plato, Demosthenes, and Homer, and in those of Shakspeare, Milton, and Lord Bacon, were enshrined as much of the divinity of intellect as the inhabitants of this planet can hope will ever take up its abode among them. But the question is not of the power or worth of individual minds, but of the general moral or intellectual merits of an age, or a people, or of the human race. Be it so. Let us allow and believe that

there is a progress in the species towards unattainable perfection, or whether this be so or not, that it is a necessity of a good and greatly-gifted nature to believe it ; surely it does not follow that this progress should be constant in those virtues and intellectual qualities, and in those departments of knowledge, which in themselves absolutely considered are of most value, things independent and in their degree indispensable. The progress of the species neither is nor can be like that of a Roman road in a right line. It may be more justly compared to that of a river, which, both in its smaller reaches and larger turnings, is frequently forced back towards its fountains by objects which cannot otherwise be eluded or overcome ; yet with an accompanying impulse that will insure its advancement hereafter, it is either gaining strength every hour, or conquering in secret some difficulty, by a labour that contributes as effectually to further it in its course, as when it moves forward uninterrupted in a line, direct as that of the Roman road with which I began the comparison.

It suffices to content the mind, though there may be an apparent stagnation, or a retrograde movement in the species, that something is doing which is necessary to be done, and the effects of which will in due time appear ; that something is unremittingly gaining, either in

secret preparation or in open and triumphant progress. But in fact here, as everywhere, we are deceived by creations which the mind is compelled to make for itself; we speak of the species not as an aggregate, but as endued with the form and separate life of an individual. But human kind,—what is it else than myriads of rational beings in various degrees obedient to their reason; some torpid, some aspiring; some in eager chase to the right hand, some to the left; these wasting down their moral nature, and those feeding it for immortality? A whole generation may appear even to sleep, or may be exasperated with rage,—they that compose it, tearing each other to pieces with more than brutal fury. It is enough for complacency and hope, that scattered and solitary minds are always labouring somewhere in the service of truth and virtue; and that by the sleep of the multitude the energy of the multitude may be prepared; and that by the fury of the people the chains of the people may be broken. Happy moment was it for England when her Chaucer, who has rightly been called the morning star of her literature, appeared above the horizon; when her Wicliffe, like the sun, shot orient beams through the night of Romish superstition! Yet may the darkness and the desolating hurricane which immediately followed in the wars of York and Lancaster, be deemed in

their turn a blessing, with which the Land has been visited.

May I return to the thought of progress, of accumulation, of increasing light, or of any other image by which it may please us to represent the improvement of the species? The hundred years that followed the usurpation of Henry IV., were a hurling-back of the mind of the country, a dilapidation, an extinction; yet institutions, laws, customs, and habits, were then broken down, which would not have been so readily, nor perhaps so thoroughly destroyed by the gradual influence of increasing knowledge; and under the oppression of which, if they had continued to exist, the virtue and intellectual prowess of the succeeding century could not have appeared at all, much less could they have displayed themselves with that eager haste, and with those beneficent triumphs, which will to the end of time be looked back upon with admiration and gratitude.

If the foregoing obvious distinctions be once clearly perceived, and steadily kept in view, I do not see why a belief in the progress of human nature towards perfection should dispose a youthful mind, however enthusiastic, to an undue admiration of his own age, and thus tend to degrade that mind.

But let me strike at once at the root of the evil complained of in my correspondent's letter.

Protection from any fatal effect of seductions and hindrances which opinion may throw in the way of pure and high-minded youth, can only be obtained with certainty at the same price by which every thing great and good is obtained, namely, steady dependence upon voluntary and self-originating effort, and upon the practice of self-examination, sincerely aimed at and rigorously enforced. But how is this to be expected from youth? Is it not to demand the fruit when the blossom is barely put forth, and is hourly at the mercy of frosts and winds? To expect from youth these virtues and habits, in that degree of excellence to which in mature years they may be carried, would indeed be preposterous. Yet has youth many helps and aptitudes for the discharge of these difficult duties, which are withdrawn for the most part from the more advanced stages of life. For youth has its own wealth and independence; it is rich in health of body and animal spirits, in its sensibility to the impressions of the natural universe, in the conscious growth of knowledge, in lively sympathy and familiar communion with the generous actions recorded in history, and with the high passions of poetry; and, above all, youth is rich in the possession of time, and the accompanying consciousness of freedom and power. The young man feels that he stands at a distance from the season when his harvest is

to be reaped ; that he has leisure and may look around, and may defer both the choice and the execution of his purposes. If he makes an attempt and shall fail, new hopes immediately rush in and new promises. Hence, in the happy confidence of his feelings, and in the elasticity of his spirit, neither worldly ambition, nor the love of praise, nor dread of censure, nor the necessity of worldly maintenance, nor any of those causes which tempt or compel the mind habitually to look out of itself for support ; neither these, nor the passions of envy, fear, hatred, despondency, and the rankling of disappointed hopes (all which in after-life give birth to, and regulate, the efforts of men and determine their opinions), have power to preside over the choice of the young, if the disposition be not naturally bad, or the circumstances have not been in an uncommon degree unfavourable.

In contemplation, then, of this disinterested and free condition of the youthful mind, I deem it in many points peculiarly capable of searching into itself, and of profiting by a few simple questions, such as these that follow. Am I chiefly gratified by the exertion of my power from the pure pleasure of intellectual activity, and from the knowledge thereby acquired ? In other words, to what degree do I value my faculties and my attainments for their own sakes ? or are they chiefly prized by me on

account of the distinction which they confer, or the superiority which they give me over others? Am I aware that immediate influence and a general acknowledgment of merit are no necessary adjuncts of a successful adherence to study and meditation in those departments of knowledge which are of most value to mankind ;—that a recompense of honours and emoluments is far less to be expected ; in fact, that there is little natural connection between them? Have I perceived this truth ; and, perceiving it, does the countenance of philosophy continue to appear as bright and beautiful in my eyes?—Has no haze bedimmed it? Has no cloud passed over and hidden from me that look which was before so encouraging? Knowing that it is my duty, and feeling that it is my inclination, to mingle as a social being with my fellow-men ; prepared also to submit cheerfully to the necessity that will probably exist of relinquishing, for the purpose of gaining a livelihood, the greatest portion of my time to employments where I shall have little or no choice how or when I am to act ; have I, at this moment, when I stand as it were upon the threshold of the busy world, a clear intuition of that pre-eminence in which virtue and truth (involving in this latter word the sanctities of religion) sit enthroned above all denominations and dignities in various degrees of exalta-

tion, over the desires of men? Do I feel that, if their solemn mandates shall be forgotten, or disregarded, or denied the obedience due to them when opposed to others, I shall not only have lived for no good purpose, but that I shall have sacrificed my birth-right as a rational being; and that every other acquisition will be a bane and a disgrace to me? This is not spoken with reference to such sacrifices as present themselves to the youthful imagination in the shape of crimes, acts by which the conscience is violated; such a thought, I know, would be recoiled from at once, not without indignation; but I write in the spirit of the ancient fable of Prodicus, representing the choice of Hercules. Here is the World, a female figure approaching at the head of a train of willing or giddy followers: her air and deportment are at once careless, remiss, self-satisfied, and haughty: and there is Intellectual Prowess, with a pale cheek and serene brow, leading in chains Truth, her beautiful and modest captive. The one makes her salutation with a discourse of ease, pleasure, freedom, and domestic tranquillity; or, if she invite to labour, it is labour in the busy and beaten track, with assurance of the complacent regards of parents, friends, and of those with whom we associate. The promise also may be upon her lip of the huzzas of the multitude, of the smile of kings, and the munificent rewards

of senates. The other does not venture to hold forth any of these allurements; she does not conceal from him whom she addresses the impediments, the disappointments, the ignorance and prejudice which her follower will have to encounter, if devoted, when duty calls, to active life; and if to contemplative, she lays nakedly before him a scheme of solitary and unremitting labour, a life of entire neglect perhaps, or assuredly a life exposed to scorn, insult, persecution, and hatred; but cheered by encouragement from a grateful few, by applauding conscience, and by a prophetic anticipation, perhaps, of fame—a late, though lasting, consequence. Of these two, each in this manner soliciting you to become her adherent, you doubt not which to prefer; but oh! the thought of moment is not preference, but the degree of preference; the passionate and pure choice, the inward sense of absolute and unchangeable devotion.

I spoke of a few simple questions. The question involved in this deliberation is simple, but at the same time it is high and awful; and I would gladly know whether an answer can be returned satisfactory to the mind. We will for a moment suppose that it can not; that there is a startling and a hesitation. Are we then to despond,—to retire from all contest,—and to reconcile ourselves at once to cares without a generous hope, and to efforts in which there is no

more moral life than that which is found in the business and labours of the unfavoured and un-
aspiring many? No. But if the inquiry have
not been on just grounds satisfactorily answered,
we may refer confidently our youth to that
nature of which he deems himself an enthusiastic
follower, and one who wishes to continue no less
faithful and enthusiastic. We would tell him
that there are paths which he has not trodden ;
recesses which he has not penetrated ; that
there is a beauty which he has not seen, a pathos
which he has not felt, a sublimity to which
he hath not been raised. If he have trembled
because there has occasionally taken place in
him a lapse of which he is conscious ; if he
foresee open or secret attacks, which he has had
intimations that he will neither be strong enough
to resist, nor watchful enough to elude, let him
not hastily ascribe this weakness, this deficiency,
and the painful apprehensions accompanying
them, in any degree to the virtues or noble
qualities with which youth by nature is furnished ;
but let him first be assured, before he looks
about for the means of attaining the insight,
the discriminating powers, and the confirmed
wisdom of manhood, that his soul has more to
demand of the appropriate excellencies of youth,
than youth has yet supplied to it ; that the evil
under which he labours is not a superabundance
of the instincts and the animating spirit of that

age, but a falling short, or a failure. But what can he gain from this admonition? He cannot recall past time; he cannot begin his journey afresh; he cannot untwist the links by which, in no undelightful harmony, images and sentiments are wedded in his mind. Granted that the sacred light of childhood is and must be for him no more than a remembrance. He may, notwithstanding, be remanded to nature, and with trustworthy hopes, founded less upon his sentient than upon his intellectual being; to nature, as leading on insensibly to the society of reason, but to reason and will, as leading back to the wisdom of nature. A re-union, in this order accomplished, will bring reformation and timely support; and the two powers of reason and nature, thus reciprocally teacher and taught, may advance together in a track to which there is no limit.

THE ANGLO-SPANISH ALLIANCE (1809).¹

Never, indeed, was the fellowship of our sentient nature more intimately felt—never was the irresistible power of justice more gloriously displayed than when the British and Spanish Nations, with an impulse like that of two ancient

¹ From *The Convention of Cintra*.

heroes throwing down their weapons and reconciled in the field, cast off at once their aversions and enmities, and mutually embraced each other—to solemnise this conversion of love, not by the festivities of peace, but by combating side by side through danger and under affliction in the devotedness of perfect brotherhood. This was a conjunction which excited hope as fervent as it was rational. On the one side was a nation which brought with it sanction and authority, inasmuch as it had tried and approved the blessings for which the other had risen to contend: the one was a people which, by the help of the surrounding ocean and its own virtues, had preserved to itself through ages its liberty, pure and inviolated by a foreign invader; the other a high-minded nation, which a tyrant, presuming on its decrepitude, had, through the real decrepitude of its Government, perfidiously enslaved. What could be more delightful than to think of an intercourse beginning in this manner? On the part of the Spaniards their love towards us was enthusiasm and adoration; the faults of our national character were hidden from them by a veil of splendour; they saw nothing around us but glory and light; and, on our side, we estimated *their* character with partial and indulgent fondness;—thinking on their past greatness, not as the undermined foundation of a magnificent building, but as the root of a

majestic tree recovered from a long disease, and beginning again to flourish with promise of wider branches and a deeper shade than it had boasted in the fulness of its strength. If in the sensations with which the Spaniards prostrated themselves before the religion of their country we did not keep pace with them—if even their loyalty was such as, from our mixed constitution of government and from other causes, we could not thoroughly sympathise with,—and if, lastly, their devotion to the person of their Sovereign appeared to us to have too much of the alloy of delusion,—in all these things we judged them gently: and, taught by the reverses of the French revolution, we looked upon these dispositions as more human, more social, and therefore as wiser, and of better omen, than if they had stood forth the zealots of abstract principles, drawn out of the laboratory of unfeeling philosophists. Finally, in this reverence for the past and present, we found an earnest that they were prepared to contend to the death for as much liberty as their habits and their knowledge enabled them to receive. To assist them and their neighbours the Portuguese in the attainment of this end, we sent to them in love and in friendship a powerful army to aid—to invigorate—and to chastise:—they landed; and the first proof they afforded of their being worthy to be sent on such a service—the first

pledge of amity given by them was the victory of Vimiera; the second pledge (and this was from the hand of their Generals) was the Convention of Cintra.

THE INTRODUCTION TO WILKINSON'S DRAWINGS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT (1810).¹

I am very happy that you have read the Introduction with so much pleasure, and must thank you for your kindness in telling me of it. I thought the part about the cottages well done; and also liked a sentence where I transport the reader to the top of one of the mountains, or rather, to the cloud chosen for his station, and give a sketch of the impressions which the country might be supposed to make on a feeling mind contemplating its appearance before it was inhabited. But what I wished to accomplish was to give a model of the manner in which topographical descriptions ought to be executed, in order to their being either useful or intelligible, by evolving truly and distinctly one appearance from another. In this I think I have not wholly failed. . . .

The drawings, or etchings, or whatever they

¹ From a letter to Lady Beaumont.

may be called, are, I know, such as to you and Sir George must be intolerable. You will receive from them that sort of disgust which I do from bad poetry, a disgust which can never be felt in its full strength but by those who are practised in an art, as well as amateurs of it. I took Sir George's subscription as a kindness done to myself; and Wilkinson, though not superabundant in good sense, told me that he saw it in that light. I do however sincerely hope that the author and his wife (who certainly, notwithstanding her faults and foibles, is no ordinary woman) may be spared any mortification from hearing them condemned severely by acknowledged judges. They will please many who in all the arts are most taken with what is most worthless. I do not mean that there is not in simple and unadulterated minds a sense of the beautiful and sublime in art; but into the hands of few such do prints or pictures fall. . . .

DEATH AND LIFE (1810).¹

Simonides, it is related, upon landing in a strange country, found the corse of an unknown person lying by the sea-side; he buried it, and was honoured throughout Greece for the piety

¹ From an Essay upon Epitaphs in *The Friend*.

of that act. Another ancient Philosopher, chancing to fix his eyes upon a dead body, regarded the same with slight, if not with contempt, saying, "See the shell of the flown bird!" But it is not to be supposed that the moral and tender-hearted Simonides was incapable of the lofty movements of thought, to which that other Sage gave way at the moment while his soul was intent only upon the indestructible being; nor, on the other hand, that he, in whose sight a lifeless human body was of no more value than the worthless shell from which the living fowl had departed, would not, in a different mood of mind, have been affected by those earthly considerations which had incited the philosophic Poet to the performance of that pious duty. And with regard to this latter we may be assured that, if he had been destitute of the capability of communing with the more exalted thoughts that appertain to human nature, he would have cared no more for the corse of the stranger than for the dead body of a seal or porpoise which might have been cast up by the waves. We respect the corporeal frame of Man, not merely because it is the habitation of a rational, but of an immortal Soul. Each of these Sages was in sympathy with the best feelings of our nature; feelings which, though they seem opposite to each other, have another and a finer connection than that of contrast.—It

is a connection formed through the subtle process by which, both in the natural and the moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other. As, in sailing upon the orb of this planet, a voyage towards the regions where the sun sets, conducts gradually to the quarter where we have been accustomed to behold it come forth at its rising; and, in like manner, a voyage towards the east, the birthplace in our imagination of the morning, leads finally to the quarter where the sun is last seen when he departs from our eyes; so the contemplative Soul, travelling in the direction of mortality, advances to the country of everlasting life; and, in like manner, may she continue to explore those cheerful tracts, till she is brought back, for her advantage and benefit, to the land of transitory things—of sorrow and of tears.

THE CUMBRIAN COAST AT BOOTLE

(1811).¹

The Isle of Man is right opposite our window; and though in this unsettled weather often invisible, its appearance has afforded us great amusement. One afternoon above the whole length of it was stretched a body of clouds,

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

shaped and coloured like a magnificent grove in winter, whitened with snow, and illuminated by the morning sun, which—having melted the snow in part—intermingled black masses among the brightness. The whole sky was scattered over with fleecy dark clouds, such as any sunshiny day produces, and which were changing their shapes and position every moment. But this line of clouds immovably attached themselves to the island, and manifestly took their shape from the influence of its mountains. There appeared to be just span enough of sky to allow the hand to slide between the top of Snâfell, the highest peak in the island, and the base of this glorious forest, in which little change was noticeable for more than the space of half-an-hour. We had another fine sight one evening, walking along a rising ground about two miles distant from the shore. It was about the hour of sunset, and the sea was perfectly calm; and in a quarter where its surface was indistinguishable from the western sky, hazy and luminous with the setting sun, appeared a tall sloop-rigged vessel, magnified by the atmosphere through which it was viewed, and seeming rather to hang in the air than to float upon the waters. Milton compares the appearance of Satan to a *fleet* descried far off at sea. The visionary grandeur and beautiful form of this *single* vessel, could words have conveyed to the mind the

picture which Nature presented to the eye would have suited his purpose as well as the largest company of vessels that ever associated together, with the help of a trade wind, in the wide ocean. Yet not exactly so, and for this reason, that his image is a permanent one, not dependent upon accident.

INSCRIPTIONS (1811).¹

It did always appear to me, that inscriptions, particularly those in verse, or in a dead language, were never supposed *necessarily* to be the composition of those in whose name they appeared. If a more striking, or more dramatic effect could be produced, I have always thought, that in an epitaph or memorial of any kind, a father, or husband, etc., might be introduced, speaking, without any absolute deception being intended: that is, the reader is understood to be at liberty to say to himself,—these verses, or this Latin, may be the composition of some unknown person, and not that of the father, widow, or friend, from whose hand or voice they profess to proceed. If the composition be natural, affecting, or beautiful, it is all that is required. This, at least, was my view of the subject, or I should

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

not have adopted that mode. However, in respect to your scruples, which I feel are both delicate and reasonable, I have altered the verses; and I have only to regret that the alteration is not more happily done. But I never found anything more difficult. I wished to preserve the expression *patrimonial grounds*, but I found this impossible, on account of the awkwardness of the pronouns, *he* and *his*, as applied to Reynolds, and to yourself. This, even where it does not produce confusion, is always inelegant. I was therefore obliged to drop it; so that we must be content, I fear, with the inscription as it stands below. As you mention that the first copy was mislaid, I will transcribe the first part from that; but you can either choose the Dome or the Abbey as you like.

Ye lime trees, ranged before this hallowed urn,
Shoot forth with lively power at Spring's return;
And be not slow a stately growth to rear
Of pillars, branching off from year to year,
Till ye have framed, at length, a darksome aisle,
Like a recess within that sacred pile
Where Reynolds, 'mid our country's noblest dead,
In the last sanctity of fame is laid, etc.

I hope this will do: I tried a hundred different ways, but cannot hit upon anything better. I am sorry to learn from Lady Beaumont, that there is reason to believe that our cedar is

already perished. I am sorry for it. The verses upon that subject you and Lady B. praise highly; and certainly, if they have merit, as I cannot but think they have, your discriminating praises have pointed it out. The alteration in the beginning, I think with you, is a great improvement, and the first line is, to my ear, very rich and grateful. As to the "Female and Male," I know not how to get rid of it; for that circumstance gives the recess an appropriate interest. I remember Mr. Bowles the poet objected to the word "ravishment" at the end of the sonnet to the winter garden; yet it has the authority of all the first-rate poets, for instance, Milton:

In whose sight all things joy, with *ravishment*,
Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze.

Objections upon these grounds merit more attention in regard to inscriptions than any other sort of composition; and on this account, the lines (I mean those upon the niche) had better be suppressed, for it is not improbable that the altering of them might cost me more trouble than writing a hundred fresh ones.

POETRY AS A STUDY (1815).¹

With the young of both sexes, Poetry is, like love, a passion ; but, for much the greater part of those who have been proud of its power over their minds, a necessity soon arises of breaking the pleasing bondage ; or it relaxes of itself ;—the thoughts being occupied in domestic cares, or the time engrossed by business. Poetry then becomes only an occasional recreation ; while to those whose existence passes away in a course of fashionable pleasure, it is a species of luxurious amusement. In middle and declining age, a scattered number of serious persons resort to poetry, as to religion, for a protection against the pressure of trivial employments, and as a consolation for the afflictions of life. And, lastly, there are many, who, having been enamoured of this art in their youth, have found leisure, after youth was spent, to cultivate general literature ; in which poetry has continued to be comprehended *as a study*.

RELIGION AND POETRY (1815).¹

Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be

¹ From the Preface to Poems, published in 1815.

inclined to settle upon those of eternity :—the elevation of his nature, which this habit produces on earth, being to him a presumptive evidence of a future state of existence ; and giving him a title to partake of its holiness. The religious man values what he sees chiefly as an “imperfect shadowing forth” of what he is incapable of seeing. The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burthen upon words and symbols. The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process where much is represented in little, and the Infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity. In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry ; between religion—making up the deficiencies of reason by faith ; and poetry—passionate for the instruction of reason ; between religion—whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions ; and poetry—ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation. In this community of nature may be perceived also the lurking incitements of kindred error ;—so that we shall find that no poetry has been more subject to distortion, than that species, the argument and scope of

which is religious; and no lovers of the art have gone farther astray than the pious and the devout.

POETIC ORIGINALITY (1815).¹

If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical Works, it is this,—that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed; so has it been, so will it continue to be. This remark was long since made to me by the philosophical Friend for the separation of whose poems from my own I have previously expressed my regret. The predecessors of an original Genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them;—and much he will have in common; but, for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road;—he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps. . . .

If every great poet with whose writings men are familiar, in the highest exercise of his genius, before he can be thoroughly enjoyed, has to call

¹ From the Preface to Poems, 1815.

forth and to communicate *power*, this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original writer, at his first appearance in the world.—Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before: Of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet?

THE POPULAR IN POETRY (1815).¹

The qualities of writing best fitted for eager reception are either such as startle the world into attention by their audacity and extravagance; or they are chiefly of a superficial kind lying upon the surfaces of manners; or arising out of a selection and arrangement of incidents, by which the mind is kept upon the stretch of curiosity and the fancy amused without the

¹ From the Preface to *Poems*, 1815.

trouble of thought. But in every thing which is to send the soul into herself, to be admonished of her weakness, or to be made conscious of her power :—wherever life and Nature are described as operated upon by the creative or abstracting virtue of the imagination ; wherever the instinctive wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions uniting, in the heart of the poet, with the meditative wisdom of later ages, have produced that accord of sublimated humanity, which is at once a history of the remote past and a prophetic enunciation of the remotest future, *there*, the poet must reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers.—Grand thoughts (and Shakspeare must often have sighed over this truth), as they are most naturally and most fitly conceived in solitude, so can they not be brought forth in the midst of plaudits, without some violation of their sanctity. Go to a silent exhibition of the productions of the Sister Art, and be convinced that the qualities which dazzle at first sight, and kindle the admiration of the multitude, are essentially different from those by which permanent influence is secured. Let us not shrink from following up these principles as far as they will carry us, and conclude with observing—that there never has been a period, and perhaps never will be, in which vicious poetry, of some kind or other, has not excited more zealous

admiration, and been far more generally read, than good; but this advantage attends the good, that the *individual*, as well as the species, survives from age to age; whereas, of the depraved, though the species be immortal, the individual quickly *perishes*; the object of present admiration vanishes, being supplanted by some other as easily produced; which, though no better, brings with it at least the irritation of novelty,—with adaptation, more or less skilful, to the changing humours of the majority of those who are most at leisure to regard poetical works when they first solicit their attention.

THE POWERS REQUISITE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF POETRY (1815).¹

The powers requisite for the production of poetry are: first, those of Observation and Description—*i.e.*, the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer: whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory. This power, though indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs

¹ From the Preface to Poems, 1815.

only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time : as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects, much in the same way as a translator or engraver ought to be to his original. 2ndly, Sensibility,—which, the more exquisite it is, the wider will be the range of a poet's perceptions ; and the more will he be incited to observe objects, both as they exist in themselves, and as re-acted upon by his own mind. (The distinction between poetic and human sensibility has been marked in the character of the Poet delineated in the original preface.) 3rdly, Reflection,—which makes the Poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts, and feelings ; and assists the sensibility in perceiving their connection with each other. 4thly, Imagination and Fancy,—to modify, to create, and to associate. 5thly, Invention,—by which characters are composed out of materials supplied by observation ; whether of the Poet's own heart and mind, or of external life and nature ; and such incidents and situations produced as are most impressive to the imagination, and most fitted to do justice to the characters, sentiments, and passions, which the Poet undertakes to illustrate. And, lastly, Judgment,—to decide how and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted ; so

that the less shall not be sacrificed to the greater ; nor the greater, slighting the less, arrogate, to its own injury, more than its due. By judgment, also, is determined what are the laws and appropriate graces of every species of composition.

IMAGINATION AND FANCY (1815).¹

The grand store-houses of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination, of poetical, as contradistinguished from human and dramatic Imagination, are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton ; to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser. I select these writers in preference to those of ancient Greece and Rome, because the anthropomorphism of the Pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets in those countries too much to the bondage of definite form ; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry. This abhorrence was almost as strong in our great epic Poet, both from circumstances of his life, and from the constitution of his mind. However imbued the surface might be with classical literature, he was a Hebrew in soul ; and all things tended in him towards the sublime. Spenser, of a

¹ From the Preface to Poems, 1815.

gentler nature, maintained his freedom by aid of his allegorical spirit, at one time inciting him to create persons out of abstractions; and, at another, by a superior effort of genius, to give the universality and permanence of abstractions to his human beings, by means of attributes and emblems that belong to the highest moral truths and the purest sensations,—of which his character of *Una* is a glorious example. Of the human and dramatic Imagination the works of Shakspeare are an inexhaustible source.

I tax not you, ye Elements, with unkindness,
I never gave you kingdoms, call'd you Daughters!

. . . But the Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion;—the Soul may fall away from it, not being able to sustain its grandeur; but, if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired, or diminished.—Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal.—Yet is it not the less true that Fancy, as she is an active, is also, under her own laws and in her own spirit, a creative faculty. In what manner Fancy ambitiously aims at a rivalry with Imagination, and Imagination stoops to work with materials of Fancy, might be illustrated from the compositions of all eloquent writers,

whether in prose or verse; and chiefly from those of our own Country. Scarcely a page of the impassioned parts of Bishop Taylor's Works can be opened that shall not afford examples.—Referring the Reader to those inestimable volumes, I will content myself with placing a conceit (ascribed to Lord Chesterfield) in contrast with a passage from the *Paradise Lost*:—

The dews of the evening most carefully shun,
They are the tears of the sky for the loss of the sun.

After the transgression of Adam, Milton, with other appearances of sympathising Nature, thus marks the immediate consequence—

Sky lowered, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completion of the mortal sin.

The associating link is the same in each instance: Dew and rain, not distinguishable from the liquid substance of tears, are employed as indications of sorrow. A flash of surprise is the effect in the former case; a flash of surprise, and nothing more; for the nature of things does not sustain the combination. In the latter, the effects from the act, of which there is this immediate consequence and visible sign, are so momentous, that the mind acknowledges the justice and reasonableness of the sympathy in nature so

manifested; and the sky weeps drops of water as if with human eyes, as "Earth had before trembled from her entrails, and Nature given a second groan."

IDIOTS (1815).¹

I have often applied to idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of Scripture that "*their life is hidden with God*." They are worshipped, probably from a feeling of this sort, in several parts of the East. Among the Alps, where they are numerous, they are considered, I believe, as a blessing to the family to which they belong. I have, indeed, often looked upon the conduct of fathers and mothers of the lower classes of society towards idiots as the great triumph of the human heart. It is there that we see the strength, disinterestedness, and grandeur of love; nor have I ever been able to contemplate an object that calls out so many excellent and virtuous sentiments without finding it hallowed thereby, and having something in me which bears down before it, like a deluge, every feeble sensation of disgust and aversion.

¹ From a letter to John Wilson (Christopher North).

LITERARY BIOGRAPHY (1816).¹

Biography, though differing in some essentials from works of fiction, is nevertheless, like them, an *art*—an art, the laws of which are determined by the imperfections of our nature, and the constitution of society. Truth is not here, as in the sciences, and in natural philosophy, to be sought without scruple, and promulgated for its own sake, upon the mere chance of its being serviceable; but only for obviously justifying purposes, moral or intellectual.

Silence is a privilege of the grave, a right of the departed: let him, therefore, who infringes that right, by speaking publicly of, for, or against, those who cannot speak for themselves, take heed that he opens not his mouth without a sufficient sanction. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, is a rule in which these sentiments have been pushed to an extreme that proves how deeply humanity is interested in maintaining them. And it was wise to announce the precept thus absolutely; both because there exist in that same nature, by which it has been dictated, so many temptations to disregard it; and because there are powers and influences, within and without us, that will prevent its being literally

¹ From a letter to James Gray.

fulfilled, to the suppression of profitable truth. Penalties of law, conventions of manners, and personal fear, protect the reputation of the living; and something of this protection is extended to the recently dead, who survive, to a certain degree, in their kindred and friends. Few are so insensible as not to feel this, and not to be actuated by the feeling. But only to philosophy enlightened by the affections does it belong justly to estimate the claims of the deceased on the one hand, and of the present age and future generations, on the other; and to strike a balance between them. Such philosophy runs a risk of becoming extinct among us, if the coarse intrusions into the recesses, the gross breaches upon the sanctities, of domestic life, to which we have lately been more and more accustomed, are to be regarded as indications of a vigorous state of public feeling. . . .

The general obligation upon which I have insisted, is especially binding upon those who undertake the biography of *authors*. Assuredly, there is no cause why the lives of that class of men should be pried into with the same diligent curiosity, and laid open with the same disregard of reserve, which may sometimes be expedient in composing the history of men who have borne an active part in the world. Such thorough knowledge of the good and bad qualities of these latter, as can only be obtained by a

scrutiny of their private lives, conduces to explain not only their own public conduct, but that of those with whom they have acted. Nothing of this applies to authors, considered merely as authors. Our business is with their books,—to understand and to enjoy them. And, of poets more especially, it is true—that, if their works be good, they contain within themselves all that is necessary to their being comprehended and relished. It should seem that the ancients thought in this manner; for of the eminent Greek and Roman poets, few and scanty memorials were, I believe, ever prepared; and fewer still are preserved. It is delightful to read what, in the happy exercise of his own genius, Horace chooses to communicate of himself and his friends; but I confess I am not so much a lover of knowledge, independent of its quality, as to make it likely that it would much rejoice me, were I to hear that records of the Sabine poet and his contemporaries, composed upon the Boswellian plan, had been unearthed among the ruins of Herculaneum.

BURNS (1816).¹

On the basis of his own character Burns has reared a poetic one, which with more or less

¹ From a letter to James Gray.

distinctness presents itself to view in almost every part of his earlier, and, in my estimation, his most valuable verses. (This poetic fabric, dug out of the quarry of genuine humanity, is airy and spiritual:—and though the materials, in some parts, are coarse, and the disposition is often fantastic and irregular, yet the whole is agreeable and strikingly attractive. Plague, then, upon your remorseless hunters after matter of fact (who, after all, rank among the blindest of human beings) when they would convince you that the foundations of this admirable edifice are hollow; and that its frame is unsound! Granting that all which has been raked up to the prejudice of Burns were literally true; and that it added, which it does not, to our better understanding of human nature and human life (for that genius is not incompatible with vice, and that vice leads to misery—the more acute from the sensibilities which are the elements of genius—we needed not those communications to inform us), how poor would have been the compensation for the deduction made, by this extrinsic knowledge, from the intrinsic efficacy of his poetry—to please, and to instruct!

It is the privilege of poetic genius to catch, under certain restrictions, of which perhaps at the time of its being exerted it is but dimly conscious, a spirit of pleasure wherever it can be found,—in the walks of nature, and in the

business of men.—The poet, trusting to primary instincts, luxuriates among the felicities of love and wine, and is enraptured while he describes the fairer aspects of war: nor does he shrink from the company of the passion of love though immoderate—from convivial pleasure though intemperate—nor from the presence of war though savage, and recognised as the handmaid of desolation. Frequently and admirably has Burns given way to these impulses of nature; both with reference to himself and in describing the condition of others. Who, but some impenetrable dunce or narrow-minded puritan in works of art, ever read without delight the picture which he has drawn of the convivial exaltation of the rustic adventurer, Tam o'Shanter? The poet fears not to tell the reader in the outset that his hero was a desperate and sottish drunkard, whose excesses were frequent as his opportunities. This reprobate sits down to his cups, while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion;—the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise—laughter and jest thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate—conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence—selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality—and, while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the

tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within.—I pity him who cannot perceive that, in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the *ills* o' life victorious.

What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in this scene, and of those who resemble him!—Men who to the rigidly virtuous are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve! The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled with exquisite skill the finer ties of imagination and feeling, that often bind these beings to practices productive of so much unhappiness to themselves, and to those whom it is their duty to cherish;—and, as far as he puts the reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably enslaved. . . .

It is probable that he would have proved a still greater poet if, by strength of reason, he could have controlled the propensities which his sensibility engendered; but he would have been a poet of a different class: and certain it is, had that desirable restraint been early established, many peculiar beauties which enrich his verses

could never have existed, and many accessory influences, which contribute greatly to their effect, would have been wanting. For instance, the momentous truth of the passage already quoted, "One point must still be greatly dark," etc., could not possibly have been conveyed with such pathetic force by any poet that ever lived, speaking in his own voice; unless it were felt that, like Burns, he was a man who preached from the text of his own errors; and whose wisdom, beautiful as a flower that might have risen from seed sown from above, was in fact a scion from the root of personal suffering. Whom did the poet intend should be thought of as occupying that grave over which, after modestly setting forth the moral discernment and warm affections of its "poor inhabitant," it is supposed to be inscribed that

—Thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stained his name.

Who but himself,—himself anticipating the too probable termination of his own course?

VANITY AND SELF-CONCEIT (1816).¹

Malignity *selects* its diet; but where is to be found the nourishment from which vanity

¹ From a letter to James Gray.

will revolt? Malignity may be appeased by triumphs real or supposed, and will then sleep, or yield its place to a repentance producing dispositions of good will, and desires to make amends for past injury; but vanity is restless, reckless, intractable, unappeasable, insatiable. Fortunate is it for the world when this spirit incites only to actions that meet with an adequate punishment in derision; such, as in a scheme of poetical justice, would be aptly requited by assigning to the agents, when they quit this lower world, a station in that not uncomfortable limbo—the Paradise of Fools! But, assuredly, we shall have here another proof that ridicule is not the test of truth, if it prevent us from perceiving, that *depravity* has no ally more active, more inveterate, nor, from the difficulty of divining to what kind and degree of extravagance it may prompt, more pernicious than self-conceit. . . . It is not recorded, that the ancient, who set fire to the temple of Diana, had a particular dislike to the goddess of chastity, or held idolatry in abhorrence. He was a fool, an egregious fool, but not the less, on that account, a most odious monster. The tyrant who is described as having rattled his chariot along a bridge of brass over the heads of his subjects, was, no doubt, inwardly laughed at; but what if this mock Jupiter, not satisfied with an empty noise of his own making, had

amused himself with throwing fire-brands upon the house-tops, as a substitute for lightning; and, from his elevation, had hurled stones upon the heads of his people, to show that he was a master of the destructive bolt, as well as of the harmless voice of the thunder!—The lovers of all that is honourable to humanity have recently had occasion to rejoice over the downfall of an intoxicated despot, whose vagaries furnish more solid materials by which the philosopher will exemplify how strict is the connection between the ludicrously, and the terribly fantastic. We know, also, that Robespierre was one of the vainest men that the most vain country upon earth has produced;—and from this passion, and from that cowardice which naturally connects itself with it, flowed the horrors of his administration. It is a descent, which I fear you will scarcely pardon, to compare these redoubtable enemies of mankind with the anonymous conductor of a perishable publication. But the moving spirit is the same in them all; and, as far as difference of circumstances, and disparity of powers, will allow, manifests itself in the same way; by professions of reverence for truth, and concern for duty—carried to the giddiest heights of ostentation, while practice seems to have no other reliance than on the omnipotence of falsehood.

A TOUR IN THE LAKES (1816).¹

Upon a supposition that you propose to take some pains in seeing the Country, I will proceed to give you directions for doing it to the best advantage. London, Manchester, Lancaster (the Castle is extremely well worth your notice); at this Town, instead of proceeding by the Coach to Kendal, inquire about the best mode of crossing the sands to Ulverstone; a coach used to go, but whether it runs now or not I cannot say. At Ulverstone you will be within seven or eight miles of the celebrated Abbey of St. Mary's, commonly called Furness Abbey. These Ruins are very striking, and in an appropriate situation; if you should think it worth while to go and see Furness, the best way would be for you and your Friend to hire a chaise, as by so doing you would preserve your strength, and only need consume three hours in the Expedition. Should you not deem this right (for you would have to go and come back by the same way), you will proceed straight from Ulverstone to Coniston Water by Penny bridge; there is a decent Inn, and at the head of Coniston Lake a very good one delightfully situated. If so inclined, you might pass a

¹ From a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson.

whole day very pleasantly there ; the morning rowing upon the water, the afternoon walking up and through Yew-dale into Tilberthwaite by a house called the Yew-tree, and up a road which will land you near another Farm-house called Tarn Hows ; at a point in this road you will suddenly come upon a fine prospect of Coniston Lake, looking down it. From Coniston to Hawkeshead ; at Hawkeshead walk up into the churchyard and notice below you the School-house, which has sent forth many northern lights. From Hawkeshead proceed to the Ferry House upon Windermere, and less than a quarter of a mile before you reach it stop, and put yourself under the guidance of an old Woman, who will come out to meet you if you sing or call for her at a fantastic sort of gateway, an appurtenance to a Pleasure House of that celebrated Patriot Mr. Curwen, called the Station. The Ferry Inn is very respectable, that at Bowness excellent. Cross at the Ferry, and proceed by Bowness up the lake towards Ambleside ; you will pass Low-wood, an excellent Inn also, but here you would be within four miles of Rydale Mount, where I shall be most happy to see you, and furnish you with a bed as long as you like. The Road I have chalked out is much the best for commencing the tour, but few take it. The usual way is to come on directly to Kendal, but I can assure you that

this deviation from the common course will amply repay you.

FURNESS ABBEY, ETC. (1817).¹

How came you to quarrel with Furness Abbey? Your old enemy, bad weather, must have persecuted you into bad humour, which, powerful as your foe was, I think he would find some difficulty in effecting. Furness Abbey presents some grand points of view, which you must have missed. The Architecture never seems to have been as highly embellished as might have been expected from the princely power and revenues of the community who erected it. But after all, why not be thankful for what has been done, and yet remains? How unlucky you were! We have had less rain during the last eleven or twelve weeks than the average of as many hours taken for the time you were among us. It has been a cold spring, but bright and beautiful, and we are now in a circle of the old golden glorious summer days; the little corn that we have in the neighbourhood, and the grass, growing as fast as in Russia or Finland. Yesterday Mrs. Wordsworth and myself were on the top of Helvellyn, my second visit within these last three weeks.

¹ From a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson.

The former was with my Sister ; we returned over its summit from Patterdale, where we had been staying a few days. I describe nothing of their appearances in Prose, you will hear of them at some future time in Verse.

MONUMENTS TO LITERARY MEN (1819).¹

Eminent poets appear to me to be a class of men, who less than any others stand in need of such marks of distinction ; and hence I infer, that this mode of acknowledging their merits is one for which they would not, in general, be themselves solicitous. Burns did, indeed, erect a monument to Fergusson ; but I apprehend his gratitude took this course because he felt that Fergusson had been prematurely cut off, and that his fame bore no proportion to his deserts. In neither of these particulars can the fate of Burns justly be said to resemble that of his predecessor : his years were indeed few, but numerous enough to allow him to spread his name far and wide, and to take permanent root in the affections of his countrymen ; in short, he has raised for himself a monument so conspicuous, and of such imperishable materials, as to render a local fabric of stone superfluous, and, therefore, comparatively insignificant.

¹ From a letter to a friend.

But why, if this be granted, should not his fond admirers be permitted to indulge their feelings, and at the same time to embellish the metropolis of Scotland? If this may be justly objected to, and in my opinion it may, it is because the showy tributes to genius are apt to draw off attention from those efforts by which the interests of literature might be substantially promoted; and to exhaust public spirit in comparatively unprofitable exertions, when the wrongs of literary men are crying out for redress on all sides. It appears to me, that towards no class of his Majesty's subjects are the laws so unjust and oppressive. The attention of Parliament has lately been directed, by petition, to the exaction of copies of newly-published works for certain libraries; but this is a trifling evil compared with the restrictions imposed upon the duration of copyright, which, in respect to works profound in philosophy, or elevated, and refined in imagination, is tantamount almost to an exclusion of the author from all pecuniary recompense; and, even where works of imagination are so constituted as to be adapted to immediate demand, as is the case of those of Burns, justly may it be asked, what reason can be assigned that an author who dies young should have the prospect before him of his children being left to languish in poverty and dependence, while booksellers are revelling in

luxury upon gains derived from works which are the delight of many nations.

This subject might be carried much further, and we might ask, if the course of things insured immediate wealth, and accompanying rank and honours—honours and wealth often entailed on their families to men distinguished in the other learned professions,—why the laws should interfere to take away those pecuniary emoluments which are the natural inheritance of the posterity of authors, whose pursuits, if directed by genius and sustained by industry, yield in importance to none in which the members of a community can be engaged?

I would readily assist, according to my means, in erecting a monument to the memory of the Poet Chatterton, who, with transcendent genius, was cut off while he was yet a boy in years; this, could he have anticipated the tribute, might have soothed his troubled spirit, as an expression of general belief in the existence of those powers which he was too impatient and too proud to develop. At all events, it might prove an awful and a profitable warning. I should also be glad to see a monument erected on the banks of Loch Leven to the memory of the innocent and tender-hearted Michael Bruce, who, after a short life, spent in poverty and obscurity, was called away too early to have left behind him more than a few trustworthy

promises of pure affections and unvitiated imagination.

Let the gallant defenders of our country be liberally rewarded with monuments ; their noble actions cannot speak for themselves, as the writings of men of genius are able to do. Gratitude in respect to them stands in need of admonition ; and the very multitude of heroic competitors which increases the demand for this sentiment towards our naval and military defenders, considered as a body, is injurious to the claims of individuals. Let our great statesmen and eminent lawyers, our learned and eloquent divines, and they who have successfully devoted themselves to the abstruser sciences, be rewarded in like manner ; but towards departed genius, exerted in the fine arts, and more especially in poetry, I humbly think, in the present state of things, the sense of our obligation to it may more satisfactorily be expressed by means pointing directly to the general benefit of literature.

TOUR ON THE CONTINENT (1820).¹

From the Valley of Lauterbrunnen we crossed the Wengern Alp to Grindelwald, and then over the grand Scheideck to Meyringen. This journey

¹ From a letter to Lord Lonsdale.

led us over high ground, and for fifteen leagues along the base of the loftiest Alps, which reared their bare or snow-clad ridges and pikes, in a clear atmosphere, with fleecy clouds now and then settling upon and gathering round them. We heard and saw several avalanches; they are announced by a sound like thunder, but more metallic and musical. This warning naturally makes one look about, and we had the gratification of seeing one falling, in the shape and appearance of a torrent or cascade of foaming water, down the deep-worn crevices of the steep or perpendicular granite mountains. Nothing can be more awful than the sound of these cataracts of ice and snow thus descending, unless it be the silence which succeeds. The elevations from which we beheld these operations of Nature, and saw such an immense range of primitive mountains stretching to the east and west, were covered with rich pasturage and beautiful flowers, among which was abundance of the monkshood, a flower which I had never seen but in the trim borders of our gardens, and which here grew not so much in patches as in little woods or forests, towering above the other plants. At this season the herdsmen are with their cattle in still higher regions than those which we have trod, the herbage where we travelled being reserved till they descend in the autumn. We have

visited the Abbey of Engelberg, not many leagues from the borders of the Lake of Lucerne. The tradition is, that the site of the abbey was appointed by angels, singing from a lofty mountain that rises from the plain of the valley, and which, from having been thus honoured, is called Engelberg, or the Hill of the Angels. It is a glorious position for such beings, and I should have thought myself repaid for the trouble of so long a journey by the impression made upon my mind, when I first came in view of the vale in which the convent is placed, and of the mountains that enclose it. The light of the sun had left the valley, and the deep shadows spread over it heightened the splendour of the evening light, and spread upon the surrounding mountains, some of which had their summits covered with pure snow; others were half hidden by vapours rolling round them; and the Rock of Engelberg could not have been seen under more fortunate circumstances, for masses of cloud glowing with the reflection of the rays of the setting sun were hovering round it, like choirs of spirits preparing to settle upon its venerable head.

LONG MEG AND HER DAUGHTERS (1821).¹

I was obliged to make a circuit which showed me for the time several miles of the course of that beautiful stream the Eden, from the bridge near Temple Sowerby down to Kirkoswald. Part of this tract of country I had indeed seen before, but not from the same points of view. It is a charming region, particularly at the spot where the Eden and Emont join. The rivers appeared exquisitely brilliant, gliding under rocks and through green meadows, with woods and sloping cultivated grounds, and pensive russet moors interspersed, and along the circuit of the horizon, lofty hills and mountains clothed, rather than concealed, in fleecy clouds and resplendent vapours.

My road brought me suddenly and unexpectedly upon that ancient monument, called by the country people Long Meg and her Daughters. Everybody has heard of it, and so had I from very early childhood, but had never seen it before. Next to Stonehenge, it is beyond dispute the most noble relic of the kind that this or probably any other country contains. Long Meg is a single block of unhewn stone, eighteen feet high, at a small distance from a

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

vast circle of other stones, some of them of huge size, though curtailed of their stature by their own incessant pressure upon it.

MODERN TRAGEDY, ETC. (1821).¹

I have read Cornwall's Tragedy, and think of it pretty much as you seem to do. The feelings are cleverly touched in it, but the situations for exhibiting them are produced, not only by sacrifice of the respectability of the persons concerned, but with great, and I should have thought unnecessary, violation of probability and common sense. But it appears to me in the present late age of the world a most difficult task to construct a good tragedy, free from stale and mean contrivances, and animated by new and suitable characters. So that I am inclined to judge Cornwall gently, and sincerely rejoice in his success. As to Poetry, I am sick of it; it overruns the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt, frog-poets (the Croakers), mice-poets (the Nibblers), a class rhyming to mice (which shall be nameless), and fly-poets (Gray in his dignified way calls flies the "Insect Youth," a term wonderfully applicable upon this occasion). But let us desist.

¹ From a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson.

RAMBLE IN NORTH WALES (1824).¹

At half-past four we departed for Llanberris, having fine views, as we looked back, of Carnarvon Castle, the sea, and Anglesey. A little before sunset we came in sight of Llanberris Lake, Snowdon, and all the craggy hills and mountains surrounding it; the foreground a beautiful contrast to this grandeur and desolation—a green sloping hollow, furnishing a shelter for one of the most beautiful collections of lowly Welsh cottages, with thatched roofs, overgrown with plants, anywhere to be met with: the hamlet is called Cum-y-glo. And here we took boat, while the solemn lights of evening were receding towards the tops of the mountains. As we advanced, Dolbardin Castle came in view, and Snowdon opened upon our admiration. It was almost dark when we reached the quiet and comfortable inn at Llanberris.

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There being no carriage-road, we undertook to walk by the Pass of Llanberris, eight miles, to Capel Cerig; this proved fatiguing, but it was the only oppressive exertion we made during the course of our tour. We arrived at Capel Cerig in time for a glance at the Snowdonian range,

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

from the garden of the inn in connection with the lake (or rather pool), reflecting the crimson clouds of evening. The outline of Snowdon is perhaps seen nowhere to more advantage than from this place. Next morning, five miles down a beautiful valley to the banks of the Conway, which stream we followed to Llanrwst ; but the day was so hot that we could only make use of the morning and evening. . . .

We dined at Conway, walked to Bennarth, the view from which is a good deal choked up with wood. A small part of the castle has been demolished, for the sake of the new road to communicate with the suspension bridge, which they are about to make to the small island opposite the castle, to be connected by a long embankment with the opposite shore. The bridge will, I think, prove rather ornamental when time has taken off the newness of its supporting masonry ; but the mound deplorably impairs the majesty of the water at high-tide ; in fact it destroys its lake-like appearance. Our drive to Aber in the evening was charming ; sun setting in glory. We had also a delightful walk next morning up the vale of Aber, terminated by a lofty waterfall ; not much in itself, but most striking as a closing accompaniment to the secluded valley. Here, in the early morning, I saw an odd sight—fifteen milkmaids together, laden with their brimming pails. How cheerful

and happy they appeared! and not a little inclined to joke after the manner of the pastoral persons in *Theocritus*.

RYDAL MOUNT (1825).¹

Never, I think, have we had so beautiful a spring; sunshine and showers coming just as if they had been called for by the spirits of Hope, Love, and Beauty. This spot is at present a paradise, if you will admit the term when I acknowledge that yesterday afternoon the mountains were whitened with a fall of snow. But this only served to give the landscape, with all its verdure, blossoms, and leafy trees, a striking Swiss air, which reminded us of Unterselen and Interlacken. . . .

I never had a higher relish for the beauties of Nature than during this spring, nor enjoyed myself more. What manifold reason, my dear Sir George, have you and I to be thankful to Providence! Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will, the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. (Of that we are sure, and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our Species,

¹ From a letter to Sir George Beaumont.

I lean upon my Friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St. John, and my creed rises up of itself with the ease of an exhalation, yet a fabric of adamant.

DIRECTIONS FOR TRAVEL IN WALES AND
IRELAND (1826).¹

From Llanberris mount Snowdon, and descend to Dolbarden Inn in the Vale of Llanberris, and by the Lake to the romantic village of Cwm y Gloed, whence to Carnarvon, Bangor, and Holy Head for Ireland; this will have shown you most of the finest things in N. and S. Wales; but, observe, with the exception of Conway Castle, a most magnificent thing, and the whole line of the great road to Ireland from Llangollen, including Capel Cerig to Bangor, which would leave your knowledge of N. W. very imperfect. But this might readily be taken at some future time, when you come into the north of Ireland, by coaching through Llangollen to Bangor, thence walking to Conway, and so on by Abergelly to Rhyl, from within two miles of which place is a daily steamboat to Liverpool, as there is one also from Bangor to Liverpool, a most delightful

¹ From a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson.

voyage of eight or nine hours. Of Ireland I can say nothing but that everybody sees Killarney; there are some fine ruins of Monasteries, etc., not far from Limerick. The Vale of the Dargle and the Wicklow Mountains would be in your way from Killarney to Dublin; supposing you to start from Dublin, you would go by Limerick and return by the Wicklow country, but to one who should leave Wales out, the best way of seeing Ireland from London would be to go from London to Bristol, and thence to Cork, Killarney, and Dublin, and the Giant's Causeway; from Belfast there will no doubt be a Steam Boat to Glasgow, and so on by steam to Iona and Staffa, and as much of the West of Scotland as you could conveniently see, returning by West.

MODES OF CONQUEST (1829).¹

The countries subjected by the ancient Romans, and those that in the middle ages were subdued by the Northern tribes, afford striking instances of the several ways in which nations may be improved by foreign conquest. The Romans by their superiority in arts and arms, and, in the earlier period of their history,

¹ From a letter to Bishop Blomfield.

in virtues also, may seem to have established a moral right to force their institutions upon other nations, whether under a process of decline or emerging from barbarism; and this they effected, we all know, not by overrunning countries as Eastern conquerors have done, and Bonaparte in our own days, but by completing a regular subjugation, with military roads and garrisons, which became centres of civilisation for the surrounding district. Nor am I afraid to add, though the fact might be caught at as bearing against the general scope of my argument, that both conquerors and conquered owed much to the participation of civil rights which the Romans liberally communicated. The other mode of conquest, that pursued by the Northern nations, brought about its beneficial effects by the settlement of a hardy and vigorous people among the distracted and effeminate nations against whom their incursions were made. The conquerors transplanted with them their independent and ferocious spirit to reanimate exhausted communities, and in their turn received a salutary mitigation, till in process of time the conqueror and conquered, having a common interest, were lost in each other. To neither of these modes was unfortunate Ireland subject, and her insular territory, by physical obstacles, and still more by moral influences arising out of them, has aggravated

the evil consequent upon independence lost as hers was. The writers of the time of Queen Elizabeth have pointed out how unwise it was to transplant among a barbarous people, not half subjugated, the institutions that time had matured among those who too readily considered themselves masters of that people.

EDUCATION IN DUTY (1830).¹

The more I reflect upon the subject, the more I am convinced that positive instruction, even of a religious character, is much overrated. The education of man, and above all of a Christian, is the education of *duty*, which is most forcibly taught by the business and concerns of life, of which, even for children, especially the children of the poor, book-learning is but a small part. There is an officious disposition on the part of the upper and middle classes to precipitate the tendency of the people towards intellectual culture in a manner subversive of their own happiness, and dangerous to the peace of society. It is mournful to observe of how little avail are lessons of piety taught at school, if household attentions and obligations be neglected in consequence of the time taken up

¹ From a letter to his brother, the Master of Trinity.

in school tuition, and if the head be stuffed with vanity from the gentlemanliness of the employment of reading.

THE SONNET (1833).¹

The sonnet, like every other legitimate composition, ought to have a beginning, a middle, and an end ; in other words, to consist of three parts, like the three propositions of a syllogism, if such an illustration may be used. But the frame of metre adopted by the Italians does not accord with this view ; and, as adhered to by them, it seems to be, if not arbitrary, best fitted to a division of the sense into two parts, of eight and six lines each. Milton, however, has not submitted to this ; in the better half of his sonnets the sense does not close with the rhyme at the eighth line, but overflows into the second portion of the metre. Now it has struck me that this is not done merely to gratify the ear by variety and freedom of sound, but also to aid in giving that pervading sense of intense unity in which the excellence of the sonnet has always seemed to me mainly to consist. Instead of looking at this composition as a piece of architecture, making a whole out of three parts,

¹ From a letter to the Rev. Alexander Dyce.

I have been much in the habit of preferring the image of an orbicular body,—a sphere, or a dew-drop.

DEMOCRACY (1833).¹

It is a fixed judgment of my mind that an unbridled Democracy is the worst of all Tyrannies. Our Constitution had provided a check for the Democracy in the Regal Prerogative, influence, and power, and in the House of Lords, acting directly through its own body, and indirectly by the influence of individual Peers, over a certain portion of the House of Commons. The old system provided in practice a check both without and within. The extinction of the nomination-borough has nearly destroyed internal check. The House of Lords, as a body, have been trampled upon by the way in which the Bill has been carried, and they are brought to that point that the Peers will prove useless as an external check, while the regal power and influence has become, or soon will, mere shadows.

She opened—but to shut
Excelled her power,

¹ From a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson.

as your friends the Bill-men of all denominations have found, or soon will find.

"THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH" (1833).¹

My opinion is that the People are bent upon the destruction of their ancient Institutions, and that nothing since—I will not say the passing—but since the broaching of the Reform Bill could or can prevent it. I would bend my endeavours to strengthen to the utmost the rational portion of the Tory Party, but from no other hope than this, that the march towards destruction may be less rapid by their interposing something of a check—and the destruction of the Monarchy thereby attended with less injury to social order. They are more blind than bats or moles who cannot see that it is a change, or rather an overthrow, of social order as dependent upon the present distribution of property which is the object of the Radicals. They care nothing what may be the form of Government but as the changes may lead to that. As to France and your *juste milieu*, it is not worth talking about.

¹ From a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson.

CRIME AND POVERTY (1835).¹

In our criminal jurisprudence there is a maxim, deservedly eulogised, that it is better that ten guilty persons should escape, than that one innocent man should suffer; so, also, might it be maintained, with regard to the Poor Laws, that it is better for the interests of humanity among the people at large, that ten undeserving should partake of the funds provided, than that one morally good man, through want of relief, should either have his principles corrupted, or his energies destroyed; than that such a one should either be driven to do wrong, or be cast to the earth in utter hopelessness. In France, the English maxim of criminal jurisprudence is reversed; there, it is deemed better that ten innocent men should suffer, than one guilty escape: in France, there is no universal provision for the poor; and we may judge of the small value set upon human life in the metropolis of that country, by merely noticing the disrespect with which, after death, the body is treated, not by the thoughtless vulgar, but in schools of anatomy, presided over by men allowed to be, in their own art and in physical science, among the most enlightened in the world. In the East, where countries are

¹ From the "Postscript" to *Yarrow Revisited*.

overrun with population as with a weed, infinitely more respect is shown to the remains of the deceased : and what a bitter mockery is it, that this insensibility should be found where civil polity is so busy in minor regulations, and ostentatiously careful to gratify the luxurious propensities, whether social or intellectual, of the multitude ! Irreligion is, no doubt, much concerned with this offensive disrespect shown to the bodies of the dead in France ; but it is mainly attributable to the state in which so many of the living are left by the absence of compulsory provision for the indigent so humanely established by the law of England.

Sights of abject misery, perpetually recurring, harden the heart of the community. In the perusal of history and of works of fiction, we are not, indeed, unwilling to have our commiseration excited by such objects of distress as they present to us ; but, in the concerns of real life, men know that such emotions are not given to be indulged for their own sakes : there, the conscience declares to them that sympathy must be followed by action ; and if there exist a previous conviction that the power to relieve is utterly inadequate to the demand, the eye shrinks from communication with wretchedness, and pity and compassion languish, like any other qualities that are deprived of their natural aliment. Let these considerations be

duly weighed by those who trust to the hope that an increase of private charity, with all its advantages of superior discrimination, would more than compensate for the abandonment of those principles, the wisdom of which has been here insisted upon. How discouraging, also, would be the sense of injustice, which could not fail to arise in the minds of the well-disposed, if the burden of supporting the poor, a burden of which the selfish have hitherto by compulsion borne a share, should now, or hereafter, be thrown exclusively upon the benevolent.

REFORM, NOT RECONSTRUCTION (1835).¹

The great religious Reformation, in the sixteenth century, did not profess to be a new construction, but a restoration of something fallen into decay, or put out of sight. That familiar and justifiable use of the word seems to have paved the way for fallacies with respect to the term reform, which it is difficult to escape from. Were we to speak of improvement and the correction of abuses, we should run less risk of being deceived ourselves, or of misleading others. We should be less likely

¹ From the "Postscript" to *Yarrow Revisited*.

to fall blindly into the belief, that the change demanded is a renewal of something that has existed before, and that, therefore, we have experience on our side; nor should we be equally tempted to beg the question, that the change for which we are eager must be advantageous. From generation to generation, men are the dupes of words; and it is painful to observe, that so many of our species are most tenacious of those opinions which they have formed with the least consideration. They who are the readiest to meddle with public affairs, whether in Church or State, fly to generalities, that they may be eased from the trouble of thinking about particulars; and thus is deputed to mechanical instrumentality the work which vital knowledge only can do well.

THE ORDER OF CURATES (1835).¹

The order of curates is so beneficial, that some particular notice of it seems to be required in this place. For a Church poor as, relatively to the numbers of people, that of England is, and probably will continue to be, it is no small advantage to have youthful servants, who will

¹ From the "Postscript" to *Yarrow Revisited*.

work upon the wages of hope and expectation. Still more advantageous is it to have, by means of this order, young men scattered over the country, who being more detached from the temporal concerns of the benefice, have more leisure for improvement and study, and are less subject to be brought into secular collision with those who are under their spiritual guardianship. The curate, if he reside at a distance from the incumbent, undertakes the requisite responsibilities of a temporal kind, in that modified way which prevents him, as a new-comer, from being charged with selfishness ; while it prepares him for entering upon a benefice of his own, with something of a suitable experience. If he should act under and in co-operation with a resident incumbent, the gain is mutual. His studies will probably be assisted ; and his training, managed by a superior, will not be liable to relapse in matters of prudence, seemliness, or in any of the highest cares of his functions ; and by way of return for these benefits to the pupil, it will often happen that the zeal of a middle-aged or declining incumbent will be revived, by being in near communion with the ardour of youth, when his own efforts may have languished through a melancholy consciousness that they have not produced as much good among his flock as, when he first entered upon the charge, he fondly hoped.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CLERGY
(1835).¹

How agreeable to picture to one's self, as has been done by poets and romance-writers, from Chaucer down to Goldsmith, a man devoted to his ministerial office, with not a wish or a thought ranging beyond the circuit of its cares ! Nor is it in poetry and fiction only that such characters are found ; they are scattered, it is hoped not sparingly, over real life, especially in sequestered and rural districts, where there is but small influx of new inhabitants, and little change of occupation. The spirit of the Gospel, unaided by acquisitions of profane learning and experience in the world,—that spirit and the obligations of the sacred office may, in such situations, suffice to effect most of what is needful. But for the complex state of society that prevails in England, much more is required, both in large towns, and in many extensive districts of the country. A minister should not only be irreproachable in manners and morals, but accomplished in learning, as far as is possible without sacrifice of the least of his pastoral duties. As necessary, perhaps more so, is it that he should be a citizen as well as a scholar ;

¹ From the "Postscript" to *Yarrow Revisited*.

thoroughly acquainted with the structure of society and the constitution of civil government, and able to reason upon both with the most expert ; all ultimately in order to support the truths of Christianity, and to diffuse its blessings.

THE SCENERY OF THE LAKES (1835).¹

I know not how to give the reader a distinct image of the outlines of the country more readily, than by requesting him to place himself with me, in imagination, upon some given point; let it be the top of either of the mountains, Great Gavel, or Scawfell; or, rather, let us suppose our station to be a cloud hanging midway between those two mountains, at not more than half a mile's distance from the summit of each, and not many yards above their highest elevation; we shall then see stretched at our feet a number of valleys, not fewer than eight, diverging from the point, on which we are supposed to stand, like spokes from the nave of a wheel. First, we note, lying to the south-east, the vale of Langdale, which will conduct the eye to the long lake of Winandermere, stretched nearly to the sea; or rather to the sands of the vast bay of Morcamb, serving here for the rim of

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

this imaginary wheel;—let us trace it in a direction from the south-east towards the south, and we shall next fix our eyes upon the vale of Coniston, running up likewise from the sea, but not (as all the other valleys do) to the nave of the wheel, and therefore it may be not inaptly represented as a broken spoke sticking in the rim. Looking forth again, with an inclination towards the west, we see immediately at our feet the vale of Duddon, in which is no lake, but a copious stream, winding among fields, rocks, and mountains, and terminating its course in the sands of Duddon. The fourth vale, next to be observed, viz. that of the Esk, is of the same general character as the last, yet beautifully discriminated from it by peculiar features. Its stream passes under the woody steep upon which stands Muncaster Castle, the ancient seat of the Penningtons, and after forming a short and narrow æstuary enters the sea below the small town of Ravenglass. Next, almost due west, look down into, and along the deep valley of Wastdale, with its little chapel and half-a-dozen neat dwellings scattered upon a plain of meadow and corn-ground intersected with stone walls apparently innumerable, like a large piece of lawless patchwork, or an array of mathematical figures, such as in the ancient schools of geometry might have been sportively and fantastically traced out upon sand. Beyond

this little fertile plain lies, within a bed of steep mountains, the long, narrow, stern, and desolate lake of Wastdale; and, beyond this, a dusky tract of level ground conducts the eye to the Irish Sea. The stream that issues from Wastwater is named the Irt, and falls into the æstuary of the river Esk. Next comes in view Ennerdale, with its lake of bold and somewhat savage shores. Its stream, the Ehen or Enna, flowing through a soft and fertile country, passes the town of Egremont, and the ruins of the castle,—then, seeming, like the other rivers, to break through the barrier of sand thrown up by the winds on this tempestuous coast, enters the Irish Sea. The vale of Buttermere, with the lake and village of that name, and Crummock-water, beyond, next present themselves. We will follow the main stream, the Coker, through the fertile and beautiful vale of Lorton, till it is lost in the Derwent, below the noble ruins of Cocker-mouth Castle. Lastly, Borrowdale, of which the vale of Keswick is only a continuation, stretching due north, brings us to a point nearly opposite to the vale of Winandermere with which we began. From this it will appear, that the image of a wheel, thus far exact, is little more than one half complete; but the deficiency on the eastern side may be supplied by the vales of Wytheburn, Ulswater, Hawswater, and the vale of Grasmere and Rydal: none of these,

however, run up to the central point between Great Gavel and Scawfell. From this, hitherto our central point, take a flight of not more than four or five miles eastward to the ridge of Helvellyn, and you will look down upon Wytheburn and St. John's Vale, which are a branch of the vale of Keswick; upon Ulswater, stretching due east:—and not far beyond to the south-east (though from this point not visible) lie the vale and lake of Hawswater; and lastly, the vale of Grasmere, Rydal, and Ambleside, brings you back to Winandermere, thus completing, though on the eastern side in a somewhat irregular manner, the representative figure of the wheel.

Such, concisely given, is the general topographical view of the country of the Lakes in the north of England; and it may be observed that, from the circumference to the centre, that is, from the sea or plain country to the mountain stations specified, there is—in the several ridges that enclose these vales, and divide them from each other, I mean in the forms and surfaces, first of the swelling grounds, next of the hills and rocks, and lastly of the mountains—an ascent of almost regular gradation, from elegance and richness, to their highest point of grandeur and sublimity. It follows therefore from this, first, that these rocks, hills, and mountains must present themselves to view in stages rising above each other, the mountains clustering

together towards the central point; and next, that an observer familiar with the several vales, must, from their various position in relation to the sun, have had before his eyes every possible embellishment of beauty, dignity, and splendour, which light and shadow can bestow upon objects so diversified. For example, in the vale of Winandermere, if the spectator looks for gentle and lovely scenes, his eye is turned towards the south; if for the grand, towards the north: in the vale of Keswick, which (as hath been said) lies almost due north of this, it is directly the reverse. Hence, when the sun is setting in summer far to the north-west, it is seen by the spectator from the shores or breast of Winandermere, resting among the summits of the loftiest mountains, some of which will perhaps be half or wholly hidden by clouds, or by the blaze of light which the orb diffuses around it; and the surface of the lake will reflect before the eye correspondent colours through every variety of beauty, and through all degrees of splendour. In the vale of Keswick, at the same period, the sun sets over the humbler regions of the landscape, and showers down upon *them* the radiance which at once veils and glorifies,—sending forth, meanwhile, broad streams of rosy, crimson, purple, or golden light, towards the grand mountains in the south and south-east, which, thus illuminated, with all their projections and

cavities, and with an intermixture of solemn shadows, are seen distinctly through a cool and clear atmosphere. Of course, there is as marked a difference between the *noontide* appearance of these two opposite vales. The bedimmed haze that overspreads the south, and the clear atmosphere and determined shadows of the clouds in the north, at the same time of the day, are each seen in these several vales, with a contrast as striking. The reader will easily conceive in what degree the intermediate vales partake of a kindred variety.

I do not indeed know any tract of country in which, within so narrow a compass, may be found an equal variety in the influences of light and shadow upon the sublime or beautiful features of landscape; and it is owing to the combined circumstances to which the reader's attention has been directed. From a point between Great Gavel and Scawfell, a shepherd would not require more than an hour to descend into any one of eight of the principal vales by which he would be surrounded; and all the others lie (with the exception of Hawswater) at but a small distance. Yet, though clustered together, every valley has its distinct and separate character: in some instances, as if they had been formed in studied contrast to each other, and in others with the united pleasing differences and resemblances of a sisterly rivalry. This con-

centration of interest gives to the country a decided superiority over the most attractive districts of Scotland and Wales, especially for the pedestrian traveller. In Scotland and Wales are found, undoubtedly, individual scenes, which, in their several kinds, cannot be excelled. But, in Scotland, particularly, what long tracts of desolate country intervene! so that the traveller, when he reaches a spot deservedly of great celebrity would find it difficult to determine how much of his pleasure is owing to excellence inherent in the landscape itself; and how much to an instantaneous recovery from an oppression left upon his spirits by the barrenness and desolation through which he has passed.

THE MERES (1835).¹

In lakes of great width, the shores cannot be distinctly seen at the same time, and therefore contribute little to mutual illustration and ornament; and, if the opposite shores are out of sight of each other, like those of the American and Asiatic lakes, then unfortunately the traveller is reminded of a nobler object; he has the blankness of a sea-prospect without the grandeur and accompanying sense of power.

As the comparatively small size of the lakes

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

in the North of England is favourable to the production of variegated landscape, their *boundary-line* also is for the most part gracefully or boldly indented. That uniformity which prevails in the primitive frame of the lower grounds among all chains or clusters of mountains where large bodies of still water are bedded, is broken by the *secondary* agents of Nature, ever at work to supply the deficiencies of the mould in which things were originally cast. Using the word *deficiencies*, I do not speak with reference to those stronger emotions which a region of mountains is peculiarly fitted to excite. The bases of those huge barriers may run for a long space in straight lines, and these parallel to each other; the opposite sides of a profound vale may ascend as exact counterparts, or in mutual reflection, like the billows of a troubled sea; and the impression be, from its very simplicity, more awful and sublime. Sublimity is the result of Nature's first great dealings with the superficies of the Earth; but the general tendency of her subsequent operations is towards the production of beauty; by a multiplicity of symmetrical parts uniting in a consistent whole. This is everywhere exemplified along the margins of these lakes. Masses of rock, that have been precipitated from the heights into the area of waters, lie in some places like stranded ships; or have acquired

the compact structure of jutting piers; or project in little peninsulas crested with native wood. The smallest rivulet—one whose silent influx is scarcely noticeable in a season of dry weather—so faint is the dimple made by it on the surface of the smooth lake—will be found to have been not useless in shaping, by its deposits of gravel and soil in time of flood, a curve that would not otherwise have existed. But the more powerful brooks, encroaching upon the level of the lake, have, in course of time, given birth to ample promontories of sweeping outline that contrast boldly with the longitudinal base of the steeps on the opposite shore; while their flat or gently-sloping surfaces never fail to introduce, into the midst of desolation and barrenness, the elements of fertility, even where the habitations of men may not have been raised. These alluvial promontories, however, threaten in some places to bisect the waters which they have long adorned; and, in course of ages, they will cause some of the lakes to dwindle into numerous and insignificant pools; which, in their turn, will finally be filled up. But, checking these intrusive calculations, let us rather be content with appearances as they are, and pursue in imagination the meandering shores, whether rugged steeps, admitting of no cultivation, descend into the water; or gently-sloping lawns and woods, or flat and fertile meadows, stretch

between the margin of the lake and the mountains. Among minuter recommendations will be noticed, especially along bays exposed to the setting-in of strong winds, the curved rim of fine blue gravel, thrown up in course of time by the waves, half of it perhaps gleaming from under the water, and the corresponding half of a lighter hue ; and in other parts bordering the lake, groves, if I may so call them, of reeds and bulrushes ; or plots of water-lilies lifting up their large target-shaped leaves to the breeze, while the white flower is heaving upon the wave.

To these may naturally be added the birds that enliven the waters. Wild-ducks in spring-time hatch their young in the islands, and upon reedy shores ;—the sand-piper, flitting along the stony margins, by its restless note attracts the eye to motions as restless :—upon some jutting rock, or at the edge of a smooth meadow, the stately heron may be descried with folded wings, that might seem to have caught their delicate hue from the blue waters, by the side of which she watches for her sustenance. In winter, the lakes are sometimes resorted to by wild swans ; and in that season habitually by widgeons, gold-ings, and other aquatic fowl of the smaller species.

MOUNTAIN TARNS (1835).¹

The Mountain Tarns can only be recommended to the notice of the inquisitive traveller who has time to spare. They are difficult of access, and naked; yet some of them are, in their permanent forms, very grand; and there are accidents of things which would make the meanest of them interesting. At all events, one of these pools is an acceptable sight to the mountain wanderer; not merely as an incident that diversifies the prospect, but as forming in his mind a centre or conspicuous point to which objects, otherwise disconnected or insubordinated, may be referred. Some few have a varied outline, with bold heath-clad promontories; and, as they mostly lie at the foot of a steep precipice, the water, where the sun is not shining upon it, appears black and sullen; and, round the margin, huge stones and masses of rock are scattered; some defying conjecture as to the means by which they came thither; and others obviously fallen from on high—the contribution of ages! A not unpleasing sadness is induced by this perplexity, and these images of decay; while the prospect of a body of pure water unattended with groves and other cheerful rural images, by which fresh water is usually accom-

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

panied, and unable to give furtherance to the meagre vegetation around it—excites a sense of some repulsive power strongly put forth, and thus deepens the melancholy natural to such scenes. Nor is the feeling of solitude often more forcibly or more solemnly impressed than by the side of one of these mountain pools: though desolate and forbidding, it seems a distinct place to repair to; yet where the visitants must be rare, and there can be no disturbance. Water-fowl flock hither; and the lonely angler may here be seen; but the imagination, not content with this scanty allowance of society, is tempted to attribute a voluntary power to every change which takes place in such a spot, whether it be the breeze that wanders over the surface of the water, or the splendid lights of evening resting upon it in the midst of awful precipices.

DAYS IN SPRING AND AUTUMN (1835).¹

Days of unsettled weather, with partial showers, are very frequent; but the showers, darkening or brightening, as they fly from hill to hill, are not less grateful to the eye than finely interwoven passages of gay and sad music are touching to the ear. Vapours exhaling from the lakes and

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

meadows after sunrise, in a hot season, or, in moist weather, brooding upon the heights, or descending towards the valleys with inaudible motion, give a visionary character to every thing around them; and are in themselves so beautiful, as to dispose us to enter into the feelings of those simple nations (such as the Laplanders of this day) by whom they are taken for guardian deities of the mountains; or to sympathise with others who have fancied these delicate apparitions to be the spirits of their departed ancestors. Akin to these are fleecy clouds resting upon the hill-tops; they are not easily managed in picture, with their accompaniments of blue sky; but how glorious are they in Nature! how pregnant with imagination for the poet! and the height of the Cumbrian mountains is sufficient to exhibit daily and hourly instances of those mysterious attachments. Such clouds, cleaving to their stations, or lifting up suddenly their glittering heads from behind rocky barriers, or hurrying out of sight with speed of the sharpest sledge—will often tempt an inhabitant to congratulate himself on belonging to a country of mists and clouds and storms, and make him think of the blank sky of Egypt, and of the cerulean vacancy of Italy, as an unanimated and even a sad spectacle. . . .

It has been said that in human life there are moments worth ages. In a more subdued tone of

sympathy may we affirm, that in the climate of England there are, for the lover of Nature, days which are worth whole months,—I might say—even years. One of these favoured days sometimes occurs in spring-time, when that soft air is breathing over the blossoms and new-born verdure, which inspired Buchanan with his beautiful Ode to the first of May; the air, which, in the luxuriance of his fancy, he likens to that of the golden age,—to that which gives motion to the funereal cypresses on the banks of Lethe;—to the air which is to salute beatified spirits when expiatory fires shall have consumed the earth with all her habitations. But it is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene;—the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonised; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. A resident in a country like this which we are treating of, will agree with me, that the presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit in perfection the beauty of one of these days; and he must have experienced, while looking on the ruffled waters, that the imagination, by their aid, is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise im-

penetrable. The reason of this is, that the heavens are not only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is mainly looked at, and thought of, through the medium of a purer element. The happiest time is when the equinoctial gales are departed; but their fury may probably be called to mind by the sight of a few shattered boughs, whose leaves do not differ in colour from the faded foliage of the stately oaks from which these relics of the storm depend: all else speaks of tranquillity;—not a breath of air, no restlessness of insects, and not a moving object perceptible—except the clouds gliding in the depths of the lake, or the traveller passing along, an inverted image, whose motion seems governed by the quiet of a time, to which its archetype, the living person, is, perhaps, insensible:—or it may happen, that the figure of one of the larger birds, a raven or a heron, is crossing silently among the reflected clouds, while the voice of the real bird, from the element aloft, gently awakens in the spectator the recollection of appetites and instincts, pursuits and occupations, that deform and agitate the world,—yet have no power to prevent Nature from putting on an aspect capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely, and the perfect, to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject.

Thus far, of climate, as influencing the feel-

ings through its effect on the objects of sense. We may add, that whatever has been said upon the advantages derived to these scenes from a changeable atmosphere, would apply, perhaps still more forcibly, to their appearance under the varied solemnities of night. Milton, it will be remembered, has given a *clouded* moon to Paradise itself. In the night-season also, the narrowness of the vales, and comparative smallness of the lakes, are especially adapted to bring surrounding objects home to the eye and to the heart. The stars, taking their stations above the hill-tops, are contemplated from a spot like the Abyssinian recess of Rasselas, with much more touching interest than they are likely to excite when looked at from an open country with ordinary undulations: and it must be obvious, that it is the *bays* only of large lakes that can present such contrasts of light and shadow as those of smaller dimensions display from every quarter. A deep contracted valley, with diffused waters, such a valley and plains level and wide as those of Chaldea, are the two extremes in which the beauty of the heavens and their connection with the earth are most sensibly felt. Nor do the advantages I have been speaking of imply here an exclusion of the aerial effects of distance.

COTTAGES (1835).¹

The cottages are scattered over the valleys, and under the hill-sides, and on the rocks ; and, even to this day, in the more retired dales, without any intrusion of more assuming buildings ;

Cluster'd like stars some few, but single most,
And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
Or glancing on each other cheerful looks,
Like separated stars with clouds between.—MS.

The dwelling-houses, and contiguous outhouses, are, in many instances, of the colour of the native rock, out of which they have been built, but, frequently the Dwelling or Fire-house, as it is ordinarily called, has been distinguished from the barn or byre by rough-cast and white-wash, which, as the inhabitants are not hasty in renewing it, in a few years acquires, by the influence of weather, a tint at once sober and variegated. As these houses have been, from father to son, inhabited by persons engaged in the same occupations, yet necessarily with changes in their circumstances, they have received without incongruity additions and accommodations adapted to the needs of each

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

successive occupant, who, being for the most part proprietor, was at liberty to follow his own fancy: so that these humble dwellings remind the contemplative spectator of a production of Nature, and may (using a strong expression) rather be said to have grown than to have been erected;—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty. Among the numerous recesses and projections in the walls and in the different stages of their roofs, are seen bold and harmonious effects of contrasted sunshine and shadow. It is a favourable circumstance, that the strong winds, which sweep down the valleys, induced the inhabitants, at a time when the materials for building were easily procured, to furnish many of these dwellings with substantial porches; and such as have not this defence, are seldom unprovided with a projection of two large slates over their thresholds. Nor will the singular beauty of the chimneys escape the eye of the attentive traveller. Sometimes a low chimney, almost upon a level with the roof, is overlaid with a slate, supported upon four slender pillars, to prevent the wind from driving the smoke down the chimney. Others are of a quadrangular shape, rising one or two feet above the roof; which low square is often surmounted by a tall cylinder, giving to the cottage chimney

the most beautiful shape in which it is ever seen. Nor will it be too fanciful or refined to remark, that there is a pleasing harmony between a tall chimney of this circular form and the living column of smoke, ascending from it through the still air. These dwellings, mostly built, as has been said, of rough unhewn stone, are roofed with slates, which were rudely taken from the quarry before the present art of splitting them was understood, and are, therefore, rough and uneven in their surface, so that both the coverings and sides of the houses have furnished places of rest for the seeds of lichens, mosses, ferns, and flowers. Hence buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of Nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields ; and, by their colour and their shape, affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil course of Nature and simplicity, along which the humble-minded inhabitants have, through so many generations, been led. Add the little garden with its shed for bee-hives, its small bed of pot-herbs, and its borders and patches of flowers for Sunday posies, with sometimes a choice few too much prized to be plucked ; an orchard of proportioned size ; a cheese-press, often supported by some tree near the door ; a cluster of embowering sycamores for summer

shade ; with a tall fir, through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless ; the little rill or household spout murmuring in all seasons ;—combine these incidents and images together, and you have the representative idea of a mountain-cottage in this country so beautifully formed in itself, and so richly adorned by the hand of Nature.

WHITE COLOUR IN NATURE (1835).¹

The objections to white, as a colour, in large spots or masses in landscape, especially in a mountainous country, are insurmountable. In Nature, pure white is scarcely ever found but in small objects, such as flowers ; or in those which are transitory, as the clouds, foam of rivers, and snow. Mr. Gilpin, who notices this, has also recorded the just remark of Mr. Locke, of N——, that white destroys the *gradations* of distance ; and, therefore, an object of pure white can scarcely ever be managed with good effect in landscape-painting. Five or six white houses, scattered over a valley, by their obtrusiveness, dot the surface, and divide it into triangles, or other mathematical figures, haunting the eye, and disturbing that repose which might other-

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

wise be perfect. I have seen a single white house materially impair the majesty of a mountain ; cutting away, by a harsh separation, the whole of its base, below the point on which the house stood. Thus was the apparent size of the mountain reduced, not by the interposition of another object in a manner to call forth the imagination, which will give more than the eye loses ; but what had been abstracted in this case was left visible ; and the mountain appeared to take its beginning, or to rise, from the line of the house, instead of its own natural base. But, if I may express my own individual feeling, it is after sunset, at the coming on of twilight, that white objects are most to be complained of. The solemnity and quietness of Nature at that time are always marred, and often destroyed by them. When the ground is covered with snow, they are of course inoffensive ; and in moonshine they are always pleasing—it is a tone of light with which they accord : and the dimness of the scene is enlivened by an object at once conspicuous and cheerful. I will conclude this subject with noticing, that the cold, slaty colour, which many persons, who have heard the white condemned, have adopted in its stead, must be disapproved of for the reason already given. The flaring yellow runs into the opposite extreme, and is still more censurable. Upon the whole, the safest colour, for general use, is

something between a cream and a dust-colour, commonly called stone colour;—there are, among the Lakes, examples of this that need not be pointed out.

ENGLISH WARBLERS (1835).¹

Yet, as most travellers are either stinted, or stint themselves, for time, the space between the middle or last week in May, and the middle or last week of June, may be pointed out as affording the best combination of long days, fine weather, and variety of impressions. Few of the native trees are then in full leaf; but, for whatever may be wanting in depth of shade, more than an equivalent will be found in the diversity of foliage, in the blossoms of the fruit-and-berry-bearing trees which abound in the woods, and in the golden flowers of the broom and other shrubs, with which many of the copses are interveined. In those woods, also, and on those mountain-sides which have a northern aspect, and in the deep dells, many of the spring flowers still linger; while the open and sunny places are stocked with the flowers of the approaching summer. And, besides, is not an exquisite pleasure still untasted by him who

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

has not heard the choir of linnets and thrushes chaunting their love-songs in the copses, woods, and hedge-rows of a mountainous country; safe from the birds of prey, which build in the inaccessible crags, and are at all hours seen or heard wheeling about in the air? The number of these formidable creatures is probably the cause why, in the *narrow* valleys, there are no skylarks; as the destroyer would be enabled to dart upon them from the near and surrounding crags, before they could descend to their ground-nests for protection. It is not often that the nightingale resorts to these vales; but almost all the other tribes of our English warblers are numerous; and their notes, when listened to by the side of broad still waters, or when heard in unison with the murmuring of mountain-brooks, have the compass of their power enlarged accordingly. There is also an imaginative influence in the voice of the cuckoo, when that voice has taken possession of a deep mountain valley, very different from anything which can be excited by the same sound in a flat country.

COMPARISONS OF SCENERY (1835).¹

Nothing is more injurious to genuine feeling than the practice of hastily and ungraciously depreciating the face of one country by comparing it with that of another. True it is, *Qui bene distinguit bene docet*; yet fastidiousness is a wretched travelling companion; and the best guide to which, in matters of taste, we can entrust ourselves, is a disposition to be pleased. For example, if a traveller be among the Alps, let him surrender up his mind to the fury of the gigantic torrents, and take delight in the contemplation of their almost irresistible violence, without complaining of the monotony of their foaming course, or being disgusted with the muddiness of the water—apparent even where it is violently agitated. In Cumberland and Westmorland, let not the comparative weakness of the streams prevent him from sympathising with such impetuosity as they possess; and, making the most of the present objects, let him, as he justly may do, observe with admiration the unrivalled brilliancy of the water, and that variety of motion, mood, and character, that arises out of the want of those resources by which the power of the streams in the Alps is supported.—Again, with respect to the moun-

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

tains ; though these are comparatively of diminutive size, though there is little of perpetual snow, and no voice of summer-avalanches is heard among them ; and though traces left by the ravage of the elements are here comparatively rare and unimpressive, yet out of this very deficiency proceeds a sense of stability and permanence that is, to many minds, more grateful—

While the hoarse rushes to the sweeping breeze
Sigh forth their ancient melodies.

Among the Alps are few places that do not preclude this feeling of tranquil sublimity. Havoc, and ruin, and desolation, and encroachment, are everywhere more or less obtruded ; and it is difficult, notwithstanding the naked loftiness of the *pikes*, and the snow-capped summits of the *mounts*, to escape from the depressing sensation, that the whole are in a rapid process of dissolution ; and, were it not that the destructive agency must abate as the heights diminish, would, in time to come, be levelled with the plains. . . .

As my object is to reconcile a Briton to the scenery of his own country, though not at the expense of truth, I am not afraid of asserting that in many points of view our LAKES, also, are much more interesting than those of the Alps ; first, as is implied above, from being

more happily proportioned to the other features of the landscape; and next, both as being infinitely more pellucid, and less subject to agitation from the winds. Como (which may perhaps be styled the King of Lakes, as Lugano is certainly the Queen) is disturbed by a periodical wind blowing *from* the head in the morning, and *towards* it in the afternoon. The magnificent Lake of the four Cantons, especially its noblest division, called the Lake of Uri, is not only much agitated by winds, but in the night time is disturbed from the bottom, as I was told, and indeed as I witnessed, without any apparent commotion in the air; and when at rest, the water is not pure to the eye, but of a heavy green hue—as is that of all the other lakes, apparently according to the degree in which they are fed by melted snows. If the Lake of Geneva furnish an exception, this is probably owing to its vast extent, which allows the water to deposit its impurities. The water of the English lakes, on the contrary, being of a crystalline clearness, the reflections of the surrounding hills are frequently so lively, that it is scarcely possible to distinguish the point where the real object terminates, and its unsubstantial duplicate begins. The lower part of the Lake of Geneva, from its narrowness, must be much less subject to agitation than the higher divisions, and, as the water is clearer than that

of the other Swiss Lakes, it will frequently exhibit this appearance, though it is scarcely possible in an equal degree. During two comprehensive tours among the Alps, I did not observe, except on one of the smaller lakes between Lugano and Ponte Tresa, a single instance of those beautiful repetitions of surrounding objects on the bosom of the water, which are so frequently seen here: not to speak of the fine, dazzling, trembling net-work, breezy motions, and streaks and circles of intermingled smooth and rippled water, which make the surface of our lakes a field of endless variety.

REFLECTIONS IN STILL WATER (1835).¹

Recurring to the reflections from still water, I will describe a singular phenomenon of this kind of which I was an eye-witness.

Walking by the side of Ulswater upon a calm September morning, I saw, deep within the bosom of the Lake, a magnificent Castle, with towers and battlements: nothing could be more distinct than the whole edifice. After gazing with delight upon it for some time, as upon a work of enchantment, I could not but regret that my previous knowledge of the place enabled

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

me to account for the appearance. It was in fact the reflection of a pleasure-house called Lyulph's Tower—the towers and battlements magnified and so much changed in shape as not to be immediately recognised. In the meanwhile, the pleasure-house itself was altogether hidden from my view by a body of vapour stretching over it and along the hill-side on which it stands, but not so as to have intercepted its communication with the lake; and hence this novel and most impressive object, which, if I had been a stranger to the spot, would, from its being inexplicable, have long detained the mind in a state of pleasing astonishment.

Appearances of this kind, acting upon the credulity of early ages, may have given birth to, and favoured the belief in, stories of subaqueous palaces, gardens, and pleasure-grounds—the brilliant ornaments of Romance.

STORMS IN THE LAKES (1835).¹

On this day, March 30, 1822, the winds have been acting upon the small Lake of Rydal, as if they had received command to carry its waters from their bed into the sky; the white billows in different quarters disappeared under clouds,

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

or rather drifts, of spray, that were whirled along, and up into the air by scouring winds, charging each other in squadrons in every direction, upon the Lake. The spray, having been hurried aloft till it lost its consistency and whiteness, was driven along the mountain-tops like flying showers that vanish in the distance. Frequently an eddying wind scooped the waters out of the basin, and forced them upwards in the very shape of an Icelandic Geyser, or boiling fountain, to the height of several hundred feet.

This small Mere of Rydal, from its position, is subject in a peculiar degree to these commotions. The present season, however, is unusually stormy;—great numbers of fish, two of them not less than 12 pounds weight, were a few days ago cast on the shores of Derwent-water by the force of the waves.

ASCENT OF SCAWFELL (1835).¹

Having left Rosthwaite in Borrowdale, on a bright morning in the first week of October, we ascended from Seathwaite to the top of the ridge, called Ash-course, and thence beheld three distinct views;—on one side, the continuous Vale of Borrowdale, Keswick, and Bas-

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

senthwaite,—with Skiddaw, Helvellyn, Saddleback, and numerous other mountains—and, in the distance, the Solway Frith and the Mountains of Scotland ;—on the other side, and below us, the Langdale Pikes—their own vale below *them*;—Windermere,—and, far beyond Windermere, Ingleborough in Yorkshire. But how shall I speak of the deliciousness of the third prospect ! At this time, *that* was most favoured by sunshine and shade. The green Vale of Esk—deep and green, with its glittering serpent stream, lay below us ; and on we looked to the Mountains near the Sea,—Black Comb pre-eminent,—and still beyond, to the Sea itself, in dazzling brightness. Turning round, we saw the Mountains of Wastdale in tumult ; to our right, Great Gavel, the loftiest, a distinct, and *huge* form, though the middle of the mountain was, to our eyes, as its base.

We had attained the object of this journey ; but our ambition now mounted higher. We saw the summit of Scawfell, apparently very near to us ; and we shaped our course towards it ; but, discovering that it could not be reached without first making a considerable descent, we resolved, instead, to aim at another point of the same mountain, called the *Pikes*, which I have since found has been estimated as higher than the summit bearing the name of Scawfell Head, where the Stone Man is built.

The sun had never once been overshadowed by a cloud during the whole of our progress from the centre of Borrowdale. On the summit of the Pike, which we gained after much toil, though without difficulty, there was not a breath of air to stir even the papers containing our refreshment, as they lay spread out upon a rock. The stillness seemed to be not of this world :—we paused, and kept silence to listen ; and no sound could be heard : the Scawfell Cataracts were voiceless to us ; and there was not an insect to hum in the air. The vales which we had seen from Ash-course lay yet in view ; and, side by side with Eskdale, we now saw the sister Vale of Donnerdale terminated by the Duddon-Sands. But the majesty of the mountains below, and close to us, is not to be conceived. We now beheld the whole mass of Great Gavel from its base,—the Den of Wastdale at our feet—a gulf immeasurable : Grasmire and the other mountains of Crummock—Ennerdale and its mountains ; and the Sea beyond ! We sat down to our repast, and gladly would we have tempered our beverage (for there was no spring or well near us) with such a supply of delicious water as we might have procured, had we been on the rival summit of Great Gavel ; for on its highest point is a small triangular receptacle in the native rock, which, the shepherds say, is never dry. There we might have slaked our

thirst plenteously with a pure and celestial liquid, for the cup or basin, it appears, has no other feeder than the dews of heaven, the showers, the vapours, the hoar frost, and the spotless snow.

While we were gazing around, "Look," I exclaimed, "at yon ship upon the glittering sea!" "Is it a ship?" replied our shepherd-guide. "It can be nothing else," interposed my companion; "I cannot be mistaken, I am so accustomed to the appearance of ships at sea." The Guide dropped the argument; but before a minute was gone, he quietly said, "Now look at your ship; it is changed into a horse." So indeed it was,—a horse with a gallant neck and head. We laughed heartily; and, I hope, when again inclined to be positive, I may remember the ship and the horse upon the glittering sea; and the calm confidence, yet submissiveness, of our wise Man of the Mountains, who certainly had more knowledge of clouds than we, whatever might be our knowledge of ships.

I know not how long we might have remained on the summit of the Pike, without a thought of moving, had not our Guide warned us that we must not linger; for a storm was coming. We looked in vain to espy the signs of it. Mountains, vales, and sea were touched with the clear light of the sun. "It is there," said he,

pointing to the sea beyond Whitehaven, and there we perceived a light vapour unnoticeable but by a shepherd accustomed to watch all mountain bodings. We gazed around again, and yet again, unwilling to lose the remembrance of what lay before us in that lofty solitude ; and then prepared to depart. Meanwhile the air changed to cold, and we saw that tiny vapour swelled into mighty masses of cloud which came boiling over the mountains. Great Gavel, Helvellyn, and Skiddaw were wrapped in storm ; yet Langdale, and the mountains in that quarter, remained all bright in sunshine. Soon the storm reached us ; we sheltered under a crag ; and almost as rapidly as it had come it passed away, and left us free to observe the struggles of gloom and sunshine in other quarters. Langdale now had its share, and the Pikes of Langdale were decorated by two splendid rainbows. Skiddaw also had his own rainbows. Before we again reached Ash-course every cloud had vanished from every summit.

ULLSWATER (1835).¹

A.D. 1805.—On the 7th of November, on a damp and gloomy morning, we left Grasmere Vale, intending to pass a few days on the banks

¹ From *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

of Ullswater. A mild and dry autumn had been unusually favourable to the preservation and beauty of foliage; and, far advanced as the season was, the trees on the larger Island of Rydal-mere retained a splendour which did not need the heightening of sunshine. We noticed, as we passed, that the line of the grey rocky shore of that island, shaggy with variegated bushes and shrubs, and spotted and striped with purplish brown heath, indistinguishably blending with its image reflected in the still water, produced a curious resemblance, both in form and colour, to a richly-coated caterpillar, as it might appear through a magnifying-glass of extraordinary power. The mists gathered as we went along: but, when we reached the top of Kirkstone, we were glad we had not been discouraged by the apprehension of bad weather. Though not able to see a hundred yards before us, we were more than contented. At such a time, and in such a place, every scattered stone the size of one's head becomes a companion. Near the top of the Pass is the remnant of an old wall, which (magnified, though obscured, by the vapour) might have been taken for a fragment of some monument of ancient grandeur,—yet that same pile of stones we had never before even observed. This situation, it must be allowed, is not favourable to gaiety; but a pleasing hurry of spirits accompanies the sur-

prise occasioned by objects transformed, dilated, or distorted, as they are when seen through such a medium. Many of the fragments of rock on the top and slopes of Kirkstone, and of similar places, are fantastic enough in themselves; but the full effect of such impressions can only be had in a state of weather when they are not likely to be *sought* for. It was not till we had descended considerably that the fields of Harts-hope were seen, like a lake tinged by the reflection of sunny clouds: I mistook them for Brothers-water, but, soon after, we saw that lake gleaming faintly with a steely brightness,—then, as we continued to descend, appeared the brown oaks, and the birches of lively yellow—and the cottages—and the lowly Hall of Hartshope, with its long roof and ancient chimneys. During great part of our way to Patterdale, we had rain, or rather drizzling vapour; for there was never a drop upon our hair or clothes larger than the smallest pearls upon a lady's ring.

The following morning, incessant rain till 11 o'clock, when the sky began to clear, and we walked along the eastern shore of Ullswater towards the farm of Blowick. The wind blew strong, and drove the clouds forward, on the side of the mountain above our heads;—two storm-stiffened black yew-trees fixed our notice, seen through, or under the edge of, the flying mists,—four or five goats were bounding among

the rocks ;—the sheep moved about more quietly, or cowered beneath their sheltering places. This is the only part of the country where goats are now found ; but this morning, before we had seen these, I was reminded of that picturesque animal by two rams of mountain breed, both with Ammonian horns, and with beards majestic as that which Michael Angelo has given to his statue of Moses.—But to return ; when our path had brought us to that part of the naked common which overlooks the woods and bush-besprinkled fields of Blowick, the lake, clouds, and mists were all in motion to the sound of sweeping winds ;—the church and cottages of Patterdale scarcely visible, or seen only by fits between the shifting vapours. To the northward the scene was less visionary ;—Place Fell steady and bold ; —the whole lake driving onward like a great river—waves dancing round the small islands. The house at Blowick was the boundary of our walk ; and we returned, lamenting to see a decaying and uncomfortable dwelling in a place where sublimity and beauty seemed to contend with each other. But these regrets were dispelled by a glance on the woods that clothe the opposite steeps of the lake. How exquisite was the mixture of sober and splendid hues ! The general colouring of the trees was brown—rather that of ripe hazel nuts ; but towards the water, there were yet beds of green, and in the highest

parts of the wood was abundance of yellow foliage, which, gleaming through a vapoury lustre, reminded us of masses of clouds, as you see them gathered together in the west, and touched with the golden light of the setting sun.

After dinner we walked up the Vale; I had never had an idea of its extent and width in passing along the public road on the other side. We followed the path that leads from house to house; two or three times it took us through some of those copses or groves that cover the little hillocks in the middle of the vale, making an intricate and pleasing intermixture of lawn and wood. Our fancies could not resist the temptation; and we fixed upon a spot for a cottage, which we began to build: and finished as easily as castles are raised in the air.—Visited the same spot in the evening. I shall say nothing of the moonlight aspect of the situation which had charmed us so much in the afternoon; but I wish you had been with us when, in returning to our friend's house, we espied his lady's large white dog, lying in the moonshine upon the round knoll under the old yew-tree in the garden, a romantic image—the dark tree and its dark shadow—and the elegant creature, as fair as a spirit! The torrents murmured softly: the mountains down which they were falling did not, to my sight, furnish a background for this

Ossianic picture ; but I had a consciousness of the depth of the seclusion, and that mountains were embracing us on all sides ; “ I saw not, but I *felt* that they were there.” . . .

At the end of Gowbarrow park a large herd of deer were either moving slowly or standing still among the fern. I was sorry when a chance-companion, who had joined us by the way, startled them with a whistle, disturbing an image of grave simplicity and thoughtful enjoyment ; for I could have fancied that those natives of this wild and beautiful region were partaking with us a sensation of the solemnity of the closing day. The sun had been set some time ; and we could perceive that the light was fading away from the coves of Helvellyn, but the lake under a luminous sky was more brilliant than before.

After tea at Patterdale, set out again:—a fine evening ; the seven stars close to the mountain-top ; all the stars seemed brighter than usual. The steeps were reflected in Brothers-water, and, above the lake, appeared like enormous black perpendicular walls. The Kirkstone torrents had been swoln by the rains, and now filled the mountain pass with their roaring, which added greatly to the solemnity of our walk. Behind us, when we had climbed to a great height, we saw one light, very distinct, in the vale, like a large red star—a solitary one

in the gloomy region. The cheerfulness of the scene was in the sky above us.

IMMORTALITY, ETC. (1839).¹

I am standing on the brink of that vast ocean I must sail so soon ; I must speedily lose sight of the shore ; and I could not once have conceived how little I now am troubled by the thought of how long or short a time they who remain on that shore may have sight of me. The other day I chanced to be looking over a MS. poem, belonging to the year 1803, though not actually composed till many years afterwards. It was suggested by visiting the neighbourhood of Dumfries, in which Burns had resided, and where he died ; it concluded thus :

Sweet Mercy to the gates of heaven
This minstrel led, his sins forgiven ;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
 With vain endeavour,
And memory of earth's bitter leaven
 Effaced for ever.

Here the verses closed ; but I instantly added, the other day,

But why to him, confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear

¹ From a letter to Professor Henry Reed.

On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live ?
The best of what we do and are,
Just God, forgive !

The more I reflect upon this last exclamation, the more I feel (and perhaps it may in some degree be the same with you) justified in attaching comparatively small importance to any literary monument that I may be enabled to leave behind. It is well, however, I am convinced that men think otherwise in the earlier part of their lives.

EXTRACTS FROM WORDSWORTH'S NOTES IN
ILLUSTRATION OF HIS POEMS.

Prefatory Lines.

If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven,
Then to the measure of that heaven-born light,
Shine, POET, in thy place, and be content :—

“Like an untended watch-fire,” etc. (l. 10):
These Verses were written some time after we had become residents at Rydal Mount; and I will take occasion from them to observe upon the beauty of that situation, as being backed and flanked by lofty fells, which bring the heavenly bodies to touch, as it were, the earth upon the

mountain-tops, while the prospect in front lies open to a length of level valley, the extended lake, and a terminating ridge of low hills ; so that it gives an opportunity to the inhabitants of the place of noticing the stars in both the positions here alluded to—namely, on the tops of the mountains, and as winter-lamps at a distance among the leafless trees.

An Evening Walk. Addressed to a Young Lady.

The young lady to whom this was addressed was my sister. It was composed at School and during my first two college vacations. There is not an image in it which I have not observed ; and, now in my seventy-third year, I recollect the time and place where most of them were noticed. I will confine myself to one instance.

Waving his hat, the shepherd from the vale
Directs his wandering dog the cliffs to scale ;
The dog bounds barking 'mid the glittering rocks,
Hunts where his master points, the intercepted flocks.

I was an eye-witness of this for the first time while crossing the pass of Dunmail Raise. Upon second thought, I will mention another image :

And fronting the bright west, yon oak entwines
Its darkening boughs and leaves in stronger lines.

This is feebly and imperfectly exprest; but I recollect distinctly the very spot where this first struck me. It was on the way between Hawkshead and Ambleside, and gave me extreme pleasure. The moment was important in my poetical history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency. I could not have been at that time above fourteen years of age. The description of the swans that follows, was taken from the daily opportunities I had of observing their habits, not as confined to the gentleman's park, but in a state of nature. There were two pairs of them that divided the lake of Esthwaite and its in-and-out-flowing streams between them, never trespassing a single yard upon each other's separate domain. They were of the old magnificent species, bearing in beauty and majesty about the same relation to the Thames swan which that does to the goose. It was from the remembrance of these noble creatures I took, thirty years after, the picture of the swan which I have discarded from the poem of "Dion." While I

was a school-boy, the late Mr. Curwen introduced a little fleet of these birds, but of the inferior species, to the Lake of Windermere. Their principal home was about his own islands; but they sailed about into remote parts of the lake, and either from real or imagined injury done to the adjoining fields, they were got rid of at the request of the farmers and proprietors, but to the great regret of all who had become attached to them from noticing their beauty and quiet habits. I will conclude my notice of this poem by observing that the plan of it has not been confined to a particular walk, or an individual place; a proof (of which I was unconscious at the time) of my unwillingness to submit the poetic spirit to the chains of fact and real circumstance. The country is idealised rather than described in any one of its local aspects.

The Forsaken.

“Lyre! though such power do in thy magic live!”

The natural imagery of these verses was supplied by frequent, I might say intense, observation of the Rydal Torrent. What an animating contrast is the ever-changing aspect of that, and indeed of every one of our mountain brooks, to the monotonous tone and unmitigated

fury of such streams among the Alps as are fed all the summer long by glaciers and melting snows! A traveller, observing the exquisite purity of the great rivers, such as the Rhone at Geneva, and the Reuss at Lucerne, where they issue out of their respective lakes, might fancy for a moment that some power in Nature produced this beautiful change, with a view to make amends for those Alpine sulliyings which the waters exhibit near their fountain heads; but, alas! how soon does that purity depart, before the influx of tributary waters that have flowed through cultivated plains and the crowded abodes of men.

The Borderers.

The study of human nature suggests this awful truth, that, as in the trial to which life subjects us, sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities, so are there no limits to the hardening of the heart, and the perversion of the understanding to which they may carry their slaves. During my long residence in France, while the Revolution was rapidly advancing to its extreme of wickedness, I had frequent opportunities of being an eye-witness of this process, and it was while that knowledge was fresh upon my memory that the Tragedy of the *Borderers* was composed.

The Lyrical Ballads.

In the spring of the year 1798, Coleridge, my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton, and the Valley of Stones near it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*, set up by Phillips, the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded, along the Quantock Hills, towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the "Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I myself suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which would bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. "Suppose," said I, "you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that

the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime." The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous after-thought. We began the composition together, on that to me memorable evening: I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular—

And listen'd like a three years' child;
The Mariner had his will.

These trifling contributions, all but one (which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded), slipt out of his mind, as they well might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. We returned after a few days from a delightful tour, of which I have many pleasant, and some of them droll enough, recollections. We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden. The

"Ancient Mariner" grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to talk of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of Poems chiefly on natural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium. Accordingly I wrote "The Idiot Boy," "Her Eyes are wild," etc., "We are Seven," "The Thorn," and some others. To return to "We are Seven," the piece that called forth this note:—I composed it while walking in the grove of Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate, that while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Mr. Coleridge and my sister, and said, "A prefatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task was finished." I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza, thus:

A little child, dear brother Jem.

I objected to the rhyme, "dear brother Jem," as being ludicrous; but we all enjoyed the joke

of hitching in our friend James Tobin's name, who was familiarly called Jem. He was the brother of the dramatist; and this reminds me of an anecdote which it may be worth while here to notice. The said Jem got a sight of the *Lyrical Ballads* as it was going through the press at Bristol, during which time I was residing in that city. One evening he came to me with a grave face, and said, "Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that Coleridge and you are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel, for, if published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous." I answered, that I felt much obliged by the interest he took in my good name as a writer, and begged to know what was the unfortunate piece he alluded to. He said, "It is called 'We are Seven.'" "Nay," said I, "that shall take its chance, however;" and he left me in despair.

Musings near Aquapendente.

We took boat near the lighthouse at the point of the right horn of the bay, which makes a sort of natural port for Genoa; but the wind was high, and the waves long and rough, so that I did not feel quite recompensed by the view of the city, splendid as it was, for the danger apparently incurred. The boatman (I

had only one) encouraged me, saying, we were quite safe; but I was not a little glad when we gained the shore, though Shelley and Byron—one of them at least who seemed to have courted agitation from every quarter—would have probably rejoiced in such a situation. More than once, I believe, were they both in extreme danger even on the Lake of Geneva. Every man, however, has his fears of some kind or other, and, no doubt, they had theirs. Of all men whom I have ever known, Coleridge had the most of passive courage in bodily peril, but no one was so easily cowed when moral firmness was required in miscellaneous conversation or in the daily intercourse of social life.

At Rome.

Sight is at first a sad enemy to imagination, and to those pleasures belonging to old times with which some exertions of that power will always mingle. Nothing perhaps brings this truth home to the feelings more than the city of Rome, not so much in respect to the impression made at the moment when it is first seen and looked at as a whole, for then the imagination may be invigorated, and the mind's eye quickened to perceive as much as that of the [imagination]; but when particular spots or objects are sought

out, disappointment is, I believe, invariably felt. Ability to recover from this disappointment will exist in proportion to knowledge, and the power of the mind to reconstruct out of fragments and parts, and to make details in the present subservient to more adequate comprehension of the past.

The River Duddon.

It is with the little River Duddon as it is with most other rivers, Ganges and Nile not excepted,—many springs might claim the honour of being its head. In my own fancy, I have fixed its rise near the noted Shire Stones placed at the meeting point of the counties Westmorland, Cumberland, and Lancashire. They stand by the wayside, on the top of the Wry-nose Pass, and it used to be reckoned a proud thing to say, that by touching them at the same time with feet and hands, one had been in three counties at once. At what point of its course the stream takes the name of Duddon, I do not know. I first became acquainted with the Duddon, as I have good reason to remember, in early boyhood. Upon the banks of the Derwent I had learnt to be very fond of angling. Fish abound in that large river,—not so in the small streams in the neighbourhood of Hawkshead; and I fell into the common delusion, that the further from

home the better sport would be had. Accordingly, one day I attached myself to a person living in the neighbourhood of Hawkshead, who was going to try his fortune, as an angler, near the source of the Duddon. We fished a great part of the day with very sorry success, the rain pouring torrents ; and long before we got home, I was worn out with fatigue ; and if the good man had not carried me on his back, I must have lain down under the best shelter I could find. Little did I think then it would have been my lot to celebrate, in a strain of love and admiration, the stream which for many years I never thought of without recollections of disappointment and distress. . . .

The traveller would be most gratified who should approach this beautiful Stream, neither at its source, as is done in the Sonnets, nor from its termination ; but from Coniston over Walna Scar ; first descending into a little circular valley, a collateral compartment of the long winding vale through which flows the Duddon. This recess, towards the close of September, when the after-grass of the meadow is still of a fresh green, with the leaves of many of the trees faded, but perhaps none fallen, is truly enchanting. At a point elevated enough to show the various objects in the valley, and not so high as to diminish their importance, the stranger will instinctively halt. On the foreground, a little

below the most favourable station, a rude foot-bridge is thrown over the bed of the noisy brook foaming by the way-side. Russet and craggy hills, of bold and varied outline, surround the level valley, which is besprinkled with grey rocks plumed with birch trees. A few homesteads are interspersed, in some places peeping out from among the rocks like hermitages, whose site has been chosen for the benefit of sunshine as well as shelter; in other instances, the dwelling-house, barn, and byre compose together a cruciform structure, which, with its embowering trees, and the ivy clothing part of the walls and roof like a fleece, call to mind the remains of an ancient abbey. Time, in most cases, and Nature everywhere, have given a sanctity to the humble works of man that are scattered over this peaceful retirement. Hence a harmony of tone and colour, a consummation and perfection of beauty, which would have been marred had aim or purpose interfered with the course of convenience, utility, or necessity. This unvitiated region stands in no need of the veil of twilight to soften or disguise its features. As it glistens in the morning sunshine, it would fill the spectator's heart with gladness. Looking from our chosen station, he would feel an impatience to rove among its pathways, to be greeted by the milkmaid, to wander from house to house, exchanging "good-morrows" as he

passed the open doors ; but, at evening, when the sun is set, and a pearly light gleams from the western quarter of the sky, with an answering light from the smooth surface of the meadows ; when the trees are dusky, but each kind still distinguishable ; when the cool air has condensed the blue smoke rising from the cottage chimneys ; when the dark mossy stones seem to sleep in the bed of the foaming brook ; *then*, he would be unwilling to move forward, not less from a reluctance to relinquish what he beholds, than from an apprehension of disturbing, by his approach, the quietness beneath him.

The White Doe of Rylstone.

Everything that is attempted by the principal personages in the "White Doe" fails, so far as its object is external and substantial : so far as it is moral and spiritual, it succeeds. The heroine of the poem knows that her duty is not to interfere with the current of events, either to forward or delay them ; but—

To abide
The shock, and finally secure
O'er pain and grief a triumph pure.

This she does in obedience to her brother's injunction, as most suitable to a mind and character that, under previous trials, had been proved to accord with his. She achieves this,

not without aid from the communication with the inferior creature, which often leads her thoughts to revolve upon the past with a tender and humanising influence that exalts rather than depresses her. The anticipated beatification, if I may so say, of her mind, and the apotheosis of the companion of her solitude, are the points at which the poem aims, and constitute its legitimate catastrophe; far too spiritual a one for instant or widely-spread sympathy, but not therefore the less fitted to make a deep and permanent impression upon that class of minds who think and feel more independently than the many do of the surfaces of things, and interests transitory because belonging more to the outward and social forms of life than to its internal spirit.

How insignificant a thing, for example, does personal prowess appear, compared with the fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom; in other words, with struggles for the sake of principle, in preference to victory gloried in for its own sake !

Yarrow Revisited.

In the autumn of 1831, my daughter and I set off from Rydal to visit Sir Walter Scott, before his departure for Italy. This journey had been delayed, by an inflammation in my eyes, till we

found that the time appointed for his leaving home would be too near for him to receive us without considerable inconvenience. Nevertheless, we proceeded, and reached Abbotsford on Monday. I was then scarcely able to lift up my eyes to the light. How sadly changed did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay, and hopeful a few years before, when he said at the inn at Paterdale, in my presence, his daughter Anne also being there, with Mr. Lockhart, my own wife and daughter, and Mr. Quillinan, "I mean to live till I am eighty, and shall write as long as I live." Though we had none of us the least thought of the cloud of misfortune which was then going to break upon his head, I was startled, and almost shocked, at that bold saying, which could scarcely be uttered by such a man, sanguine as he was, without a momentary forgetfulness of the instability of human life. But to return to Abbotsford. The inmates and guests we found there were Sir Walter, Major Scott, Anne Scott, and Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart; Mr. Liddell, his lady and brother, and Mr. Allan, the painter, and Mr. Laidlaw, a very old friend of Sir Walter's. One of Burns's sons, an officer in the Indian service, had left the house a day or two before, and had kindly expressed his regret that he could not wait my arrival, a regret that I may truly say was mutual. In the evening,

Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sang, and Mrs. Lockhart chaunted old ballads to her harp; and Mr. Allan, hanging over the back of a chair, told and acted odd stories in a humorous way. With this exhibition, and his daughter's singing, Sir Walter was much amused, and, indeed, were we all, as far as circumstances would allow. But what is most worthy of mention is the admirable demeanour of Major Scott during that evening. He had much to suffer from the sight of his father's infirmities and from the great change that was about to take place at the residence he had built, and where he had long lived in so much prosperity and happiness. But what struck me most was the patient kindness with which he supported himself under the many fretful expressions that his sister Anne addressed to him or uttered in his hearing. She, poor thing, as mistress of that house, had been subject, after her mother's death, to a heavier load of care and responsibility, and greater sacrifices of time, than one of such a constitution of body and mind was able to bear. Of this Dora and I were made so sensible, that as soon as we had crossed the Tweed on our departure, we gave vent at the same moment to our apprehensions that her brain would fail and she would go out of her mind, or that she would sink under the trials she had passed and those which awaited her.

On Tuesday morning, Sir Walter Scott accompanied us, and most of the party, to Newark Castle, on the *Yarrow*. When we alighted from the carriages, he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting these his favourite haunts. Of that excursion, the verses, "Yarrow Revisited," are a memorial. Notwithstanding the romance that pervades Sir Walter's works, and attaches to many of his habits, there is too much pressure of fact for these verses to harmonise, as much as I could wish, with the two preceding poems. On our return in the afternoon, we had to cross the Tweed, directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheels of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream, that there flows somewhat rapidly. A rich, but sad light, of rather a purple than a golden hue, was spread over the Eildon Hills at that moment; and, thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning,

A trouble, not of clouds.

At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and on the morning of that day, Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation, *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which, upon the whole, he had led. He had written in my daughter's album, before he came into the

breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her; and while putting the book into her hand, in his own Study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence, "I should not have done anything of this kind, but for your father's sake; they are probably the last verses I shall ever write."

Roslin Chapel during a Storm.

We were detained, by incessant rain and storm, at the small inn near Roslin Chapel, and I passed a great part of the day pacing to and fro in this beautiful structure, which, though not used for public service, is not allowed to go to ruin. Here this sonnet was composed, and [I shall be fully satisfied] if it has at all done justice to the feeling which the place and the storm raging without inspired. I was as a prisoner. A Painter delineating the interior of the chapel and its minute features, under such circumstances, would have no doubt found his time agreeably shortened. But the movements of the mind must be more free while dealing with words than with lines and colours. Such, at least, was then, and has been on many other occasions, my belief; and as it is allotted to few to follow both arts with success, I am grateful to my own calling for this and a

thousand other recommendations which are denied to that of the Painter.

*Ailsa Crag during an eclipse of the sun,
July 17, 1833.*

The morning of the eclipse was exquisitely beautiful while we passed the Crag, as described in the sonnet. On the deck of the steamboat were several persons of the poor and labouring class ; and I could not but be struck with their cheerful talk with each other, while not one of them seemed to notice the magnificent objects with which we were surrounded ; and even the phenomenon of the eclipse attracted but little of their attention. Was it right not to regret this ? They appeared to me, however, so much alive in their own minds to their own concerns that I could not look upon it as a misfortune that they had little perception for such pleasures as cannot be cultivated without ease and leisure. Yet, if one surveys life in all its duties and relations, such ease and leisure will not be found so enviable a privilege as it may at first appear. Natural philosophy, painting, and poetry, and refined taste, are no doubt great acquisitions to society ; but among those who dedicate themselves to such pursuits it is to be feared that few are as happy and as consistent in the

management of their lives as the class of persons who at that time led me into this course of reflection.

Lines written in Germany (1798-99).

“ A plague,” etc.

A bitter winter it was when these verses were composed by the side of my sister, in our lodgings, at a draper's house, in the romantic imperial town of Goslar, on the edge of the Hartz Forest. In this town the German Emperors of the Franconian line were accustomed to keep their court, and it retains vestiges of ancient splendour. So severe was the cold of this winter, that when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage that was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night ; but with the protection of a pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's-skin bonnet, such as was worn by the peasants, I walked daily on the ramparts, or in a sort of public ground or garden, in which was a pond. Here I had no companion but a king-fisher, a beautiful creature that used to glance by me.

Ode to Duty.

Many and many a time have I been twitted by my wife and sister for having forgotten this dedication of myself to the stern lawgiver. Transgressor indeed I have been, from hour to hour, from day to day; I would fain hope however not more flagrantly or in a worse way than most of my tuneful brethren. But these last words are in a wrong strain. We should be rigorous to ourselves, and forbearing, if not indulgent, to others, and if we make comparisons at all it ought to be with those who have morally excelled us.

The Lawn at Rydal Mount.

This lawn is the sloping one approaching the kitchen-garden, and was made out of it. Hundreds of times have I here watched the dancing of shadows amid a press of sunshine, and other beautiful appearances of light and shade, flowers and shrubs. What a contrast between this and the cabbages and onions and carrots that used to grow there on a piece of ugly-shaped unsightly ground! No reflection, however, either upon cabbages or onions. The latter, we know, were worshipped by the Egyptians; and he must have a poor eye for beauty who has not observed how much of it there is

in the form and colour which cabbages and plants of this genus exhibit through the various stages of their growth and decay. A richer display of colour in vegetable nature can scarcely be conceived than Coleridge, my sister, and I saw in a bed of potato plants in blossom near a hut upon the moor between Inversneyd and Loch Katrine. These blossoms were of such extraordinary beauty and richness that no one could have passed them without notice. But the sense must be cultivated through the mind before we can perceive those inexhaustible treasures of Nature—for such they truly are—without the least necessary reference to the utility of her productions, or even to the laws whereupon, as we learn by research, they are dependent. Some are of opinion that the habit of analysing, decomposing, and anatomising, is inevitably unfavourable to the perception of beauty. People are led into this mistake by overlooking the fact that such processes being to a certain extent within the reach of a limited intellect, we are apt to ascribe to them that insensibility of which they are in truth the effect, and not the cause. Admiration and love, to which all knowledge truly vital must tend, are felt by men of real genius in proportion as their discoveries in Natural Philosophy are enlarged; and the beauty in form of a plant or an animal is not made less but more apparent

as a whole by a more accurate insight into its constituent properties and powers. A *Savant*, who is not also a poet in soul and a religionist in heart, is a feeble and unhappy creature.

Rydal Mount.

I often ask myself what will become of Rydal Mount after our day. Will the old walls and steps remain in front of the house and about the grounds, or will they be swept away with all the beautiful mosses and ferns and wild geraniums and other flowers which their rude construction suffered and encouraged to grow among them? This little wild flower, "Poor Robin," is here constantly courting my attention and exciting what may be called a domestic interest with the varying aspects of its stalks and leaves and flowers. Strangely do the tastes of men differ, according to their employment and habits of life. "What a nice well would that be," said a labouring man to me one day, "if all that rubbish was cleared off." The "rubbish" was some of the most beautiful mosses and lichens and ferns and other wild growths, as could possibly be seen. Defend us from the tyranny of trimness and neatness, showing itself in this way! Chatterton says of Freedom, "Upon her head wild weeds were spread," and depend upon it, if "the marvellous boy"

had undertaken to give Flora a garland, he would have preferred what we are apt to call weeds to garden-flowers.

*Intimations of Immortality, from Recollections
of early Childhood.*

Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere

A simple child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

But it was not so much from the source of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated in something of the same way to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have

I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines, "Obstinate questionings," etc. To that dreamlike vividness and splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here; but having in the Poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in Revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favour. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations, and among all persons acquainted with classic literature is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the

world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the "Immortality of the Soul," I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorising me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet.

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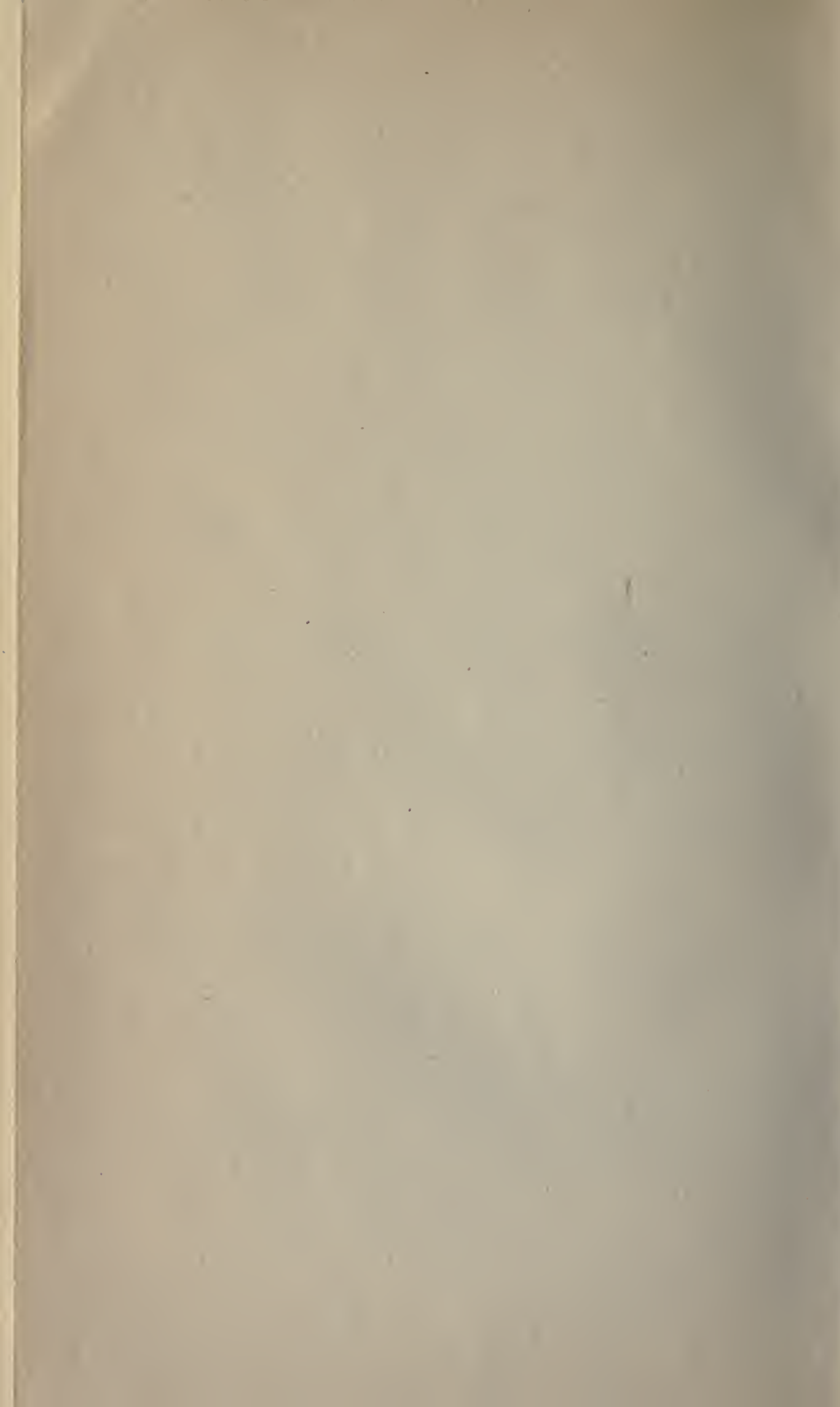
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